

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-first
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 5 and 6, 1991

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THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 and 6, 1991. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 6:00 P.M.

President Ezra Taft Benson presided at the Saturday morning and Sunday morning sessions. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of some of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried via satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

The First Presidency: Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson

The Council of the Twelve: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell,

Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

The Presidency of the Seventy: Dean L. Larsen, Marion D. Hanks, Robert L. Backman, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, and Carlos E. Asay

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn,¹ Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, L. Aldin Porter, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, H. Verlan Andersen, Eduardo Ayala, Benjamin B. Banks, George I. Cannon, Albert Choules, Jr., Spencer J. Condie, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, Robert K. Dellenbach, Graham W. Doxey, Lloyd P. George, Francis M. Gibbons, F. Melvin Hammond, Han In Sang, George R. Hill III, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L. Kofford, John R. Lasater, W. Mack Lawrence, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, Douglas J. Martin,¹ Gerald E. Melchin, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd,

¹Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Helvécio Martins were excused because of illness.

Gardner H. Russell, Robert E. Sackley, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Douglas H. Smith, Lynn A. Sorensen, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Robert D. Hales, Henry B. Eyring, and Glenn L. Pace.

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included Regional Representatives, stake presidents and their counselors, temple presidents, bishops, and presidencies and members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood quorums.

Many general, stake, and ward auxiliary officers also attended.

FIRST DAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 10:00 A.M. President Ezra Taft Benson presided, and President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Hark All Ye Nations" without announcement. President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 161st semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson honors us with his presence this day. He presides at this conference and has asked that I conduct this session.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall,

where Elders Marvin J. Ashton, James M. Paramore, and Douglas H. Smith are seated on the stand. We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except Elders Vaughn J. Featherstone and Helvécio Martins, who are excused because of illness. Elder Han In Sang is also excused because of the death of his mother. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand. We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened this session by singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The chorus will now favor us with "Awake and Arise."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Awake and Arise."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

President Benson is with us

It is wonderful to have President Benson with us as we open this great world conference of the Church. His smile upon us and the wave of his hand mean much to all of us. Wherever we go, at home or abroad, we receive the same request: "Give our love to President Benson."

President, I am confident I speak for all who participate with us today when I say we respect you, we honor you, we love you as the prophet of the Lord in our time.

In your behalf, I convey your love and blessing upon the Saints everywhere, and likewise your testimony as spoken on previous occasions. These are your own words:

Christ is the light

"No other single influence has had so great an impact on this earth as the life of Jesus the Christ. We cannot conceive of our lives without his teachings. Without him we would be lost in a mirage of beliefs and worships, born in

fear and darkness where the sensual and materialistic hold sway. We are far short of the goal he set for us, but we must never lose sight of it; nor must we forget that our great climb toward the light, toward perfection, would not be possible except for his teachings, his life, his death, and his resurrection" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 19; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 34).

I testify that Christ is the light to all mankind. He has "pointed, marked out and lighted the way. 'Sadly, many individuals and nations have extinguished that light. They have attempted to supplant His gospel with coercion and the sword'" ("Myriad of Lights to Remind of Savior," *Church News*, 4 Dec. 1982, p. 10). But even to those who reject Him, He is "the light [which] shineth in darkness" (John 1:5).

Thank you, our prophet dear, and please be assured of our prayers. May our Heavenly Father continue to bless you.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Contributions of the Smith family

A relatively simple but significant event took place in Nauvoo, Illinois, on the fourth of August this year. After many months of careful planning, the descendants of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith dedicated the refurbished Smith Family Cemetery and opened it to the public.

As I attended the dedicatory services, my thoughts were centered on the remarkable contribution the family of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith made toward the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was thinking especially of the Prophet, his brother Hyrum, and their parents.

I believe the Smith family burial plot should have a special meaning to every member of the Church. We all want those who are interred there to rise up on resurrection day in a beautiful garden spot. The Prophet said in a funeral sermon:

"I will tell you what I want. If tomorrow I shall be called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection let me strike hands with my father, and cry, 'My father,' and he will say, 'My son, my son,' as soon as the rock rends and before we come out of our graves. . . .

"And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the

side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me" (*History of the Church*, 5:361-62).

Each person who has a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ should love and appreciate Joseph Smith, Jr., for he is "the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, [who] has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3).

The ancient prophet Nephi wrote that he was "born of goodly parents" (1 Nephi 1:1). So was the Prophet Joseph Smith; he once declared, "Words and language are inadequate to express the gratitude that I owe to God for having given me so honorable a parentage" (*History of the Church*, 5:126).

Joseph Smith, Sr.

The Lord foreordained his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., who is spoken of in the holy scriptures, to be one of the earthly parents of the Prophet. Joseph of Egypt prophesied that the latter-day seer whom God would raise up to do his work would be "called Joseph" (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:33), and his name would "be after the name of his father" (2 Nephi 3:15). The heavenly messenger Moroni admonished young Joseph to go to his father following a glorious night of sacred instruction. In Joseph's words, this messenger "commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received. I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger" (Joseph Smith—History 1:49-50).

Joseph Smith, Sr., was in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. He knew that his young son spoke the truth. He not only believed the boy's words but encouraged him in the work he had been called to do.

Joseph, Sr., endured ridicule and persecution because of his prophet son's experiences and claims. Yet he was unwavering in his loving support and defended his son.

He saw and handled the plates of gold from which the Book of Mormon was translated and testified throughout his life to the truthfulness of that sacred book. His name remains firmly affixed, with those of the other witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in the front pages of that second witness of Jesus Christ. On one occasion he was imprisoned and told he would be released if he would deny the Book of Mormon. Not only did he *not* deny it, but he converted two persons during his thirty-day confinement.

President Lorenzo Snow said: "I do not know that any man among the Saints was more loved than Father Smith; and when any one was seriously sick Father Smith would be called for, whether it was night or day. He was as noble and generous a man as I have ever known" (quoted in LeRoi C. Snow, "How Lorenzo Snow Found God," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1937, p. 84).

At the time of his death, Joseph Smith, Sr., was described as "a man faithful to his God and to the Church in every situation and under all circumstances through which he was called to pass" (*History of the Church*, 4:192).

Just a few months after Joseph Smith, Sr., passed from this life, the Lord revealed that the Prophet's father was in His presence, and "blessed and holy is he, for he is mine" (D&C 124:19). Indeed, Joseph Smith, Sr., played a vital role in establishing the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Lucy Mack Smith

Perhaps less visible than the Prophet's father, but equally important in shaping and influencing his life, was his mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Although this strong woman gave occasional leadership, her primary role appeared to be support to the family. She gave birth to eleven children and endured faithfully as all but four preceded her in death. During her life, she watched six of her immediate family and one grandson die as a result of ruthless mob violence and persecution.

Lucy prepared herself early in her marriage to raise a prophet. On one occasion she became seriously ill, and the doctors said she would die. Lucy records that she "made a solemn covenant with God that if He would let me live I would endeavor to serve him according to the best of my abilities." After a voice assured her that she would live, she told her mother, "The Lord will let me live, if I am faithful to the promise which I made to him, to be a comfort to my mother, my husband, and my children" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958], pp. 34-35).

She gave continual encouragement, support, and strength to her son Joseph the Prophet. His mother was the first person with whom young Joseph shared some of his momentous experiences of the Sacred Grove. Years later, he shared with her the joy and relief he felt when the Lord allowed others to view the sacred plates of gold. Lucy wrote that "Joseph threw himself down beside me, and exclaimed, . . . 'You do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. They have seen an angel, . . . and they will have to bear witness to the truth of what I have said, for now they know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the

people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear'" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 152).

The Prophet's mother shared also in his sorrows, sufferings, and persecutions. One time a mob took Joseph and his brother Hyrum prisoner and threatened to shoot them. The two brothers were confined under a cloth cover in a wagon. Their courageous mother risked her life and forced her way through the hostile mob to comfort her sons. Joseph and Hyrum could not see their mother and could only extend a hand from under the confining cover. As Lucy's hand and the hands of her sons touched, the wagon drove off, literally tearing the sorrowing mother from her two sons.

Her determination to testify to the restoration of the gospel may have led her to dictate her well-known *History of Joseph Smith*. This was a major undertaking in her day. The book's importance to the Church today is immeasurable! It contains many details of the Prophet Joseph's life that might never have been known otherwise. It stands as a monument to the devotion of Lucy Mack Smith and her family.

Like great parents of all ages, Lucy turned to prayer for divine help to sustain her family. During the march from Ohio to Missouri known as Zion's Camp, Joseph and Hyrum were seriously ill with cholera, and their lives were almost taken. At one point, "Hyrum sprang to his feet and exclaimed, 'Joseph, we shall return to our families. I have had an open vision, in which I saw mother kneeling under an apple tree; and she is even now asking God, in tears, to spare our lives. . . . The Spirit testifies, that her prayers . . . will be answered'" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 229).

In the exercise of agency and in the divine providence of God, Lucy's sons Joseph and Hyrum ultimately

sealed their testimonies with their blood. As the grieving mother looked upon their lifeless remains, she cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken this family!" As a kind blessing to a faithful mother, the Lord softened her grief and granted to her the peace that only God can bestow. A voice spoke to her soul: "I have taken them to myself, that they might have rest" (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 324).

Hyrum Smith

Hyrum Smith, older brother, friend, and mentor to the Prophet, showed absolute, unequivocal love, loyalty, and allegiance to the Lord and to his younger brother Joseph. Their brotherhood may be unsurpassed. The scriptures tell us, "In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!" (D&C 135:3).

Of Hyrum, Joseph said, "I could pray in my heart that all my brethren were like unto my beloved brother Hyrum, who possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and in short, the meekness and humility of Christ; and I love him with that love that is stronger than death, for I never had occasion to rebuke him, nor he me" (*History of the Church*, 2:338).

Throughout Hyrum's life, he guarded his younger brother as tenderly as if the Prophet had been his own son. Joseph surely knew the value of true and faithful associates because he had trusted many who later proved to be false.

In addition to Joseph's tribute, the Lord spoke of His love for Hyrum: "Blessed is my servant Hyrum Smith; for I, the Lord, love him because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me, saith the Lord" (D&C 124:15).

Hyrum was unwavering, even in the face of death. Following one period

of great deprivation and persecution, he wrote:

"I thank God that I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled [the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated], and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast; and I can assure my beloved brethren that I was enabled to bear as strong a testimony, when nothing but death presented itself, as ever I did in my life" ("Communications," *Times and Seasons*, Dec. 1839, p. 23).

Lessons from Joseph and Hyrum

From the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum, we can learn many valuable lessons. I share just these two examples today. In a letter dated March 15, 1844, just a few months before his martyrdom, Hyrum wrote:

"Now, therefore, I say unto you, you must cease preaching your miraculous things, and let the mysteries alone until by and bye. Preach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance and baptism for the remission of sins; the laying on of the hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; teaching the necessity of strict obedience unto these principles; reasoning out of the scriptures; proving them unto the people. Cease your schisms and divisions, and your contentions. Humble yourselves" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 Mar. 1844, p. 474).

And then from the Prophet Joseph:

"There are those who profess to be Saints who are too apt to murmur, and find fault, when any advice is given, which comes in opposition to their feelings, even when they, themselves, ask for counsel; much more so when counsel is given unasked for, which does not agree with their notion of things; but brethren, we hope for better things from the most of you; we

trust that you desire counsel, from time to time, and that you will cheerfully conform to it, whenever you receive it from a proper source" (*History of the Church*, 4:45).

These inspired statements from Hyrum and Joseph to Church members in their day are certainly appropriate for Church members today. While standing in Nauvoo at the foot of the headstone of these noble men, I had the impression that they would have me counsel all members of the Church to remain anchored to the basic and simple principles of the gospel. Study the scriptures; look to the leaders of the Church for guidance in these troubled times. Brothers and sisters, be careful of the schisms, divisions, and contentions that are among us today. Keep the commandments so the Holy Ghost will be with you in your search for truth and knowledge.

I bear humble witness that Joseph Smith is one of the great, noble ones to come to the earth. He and his brother Hyrum deserve our honor, respect, and gratitude as do other members of their family who assisted with the restora-

tion of the fulness of the gospel. I testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet of God at this time, and the Apostles and other General Authorities, who are seated on this stand, are ordained of God to preside over the Church. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, stands at the head of the Church. Our Heavenly Father lives and watches over each of His children. To this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the chorus singing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Presidency of the Seventy will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy.

Elder Robert L. Backman

While abridging the records of the Nephites, Mormon wrote: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). This humble yet straightforward declaration ought to express the feelings of all Latter-day Saints—disciples of Christ called to minister in his cause.

Christ—more than a king

Who is this Jesus whom we worship? Above all people on earth, we Latter-day Saints should appreciate the vital significance of Jesus of Nazareth—his role in the plan of salvation,

his virgin birth, his immaculate life, his powerful teachings, his selfless death, his glorious resurrection, his guidance of his Church.

In Lloyd Douglas's book *The Robe* is an imaginative account of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, riding a donkey. Amid the hysteria of the excited multitude, ignorant of the significance of the event and of its chief Actor, occurs a conversation between two Greek slaves:

"See him—close up?" [asked the uncouth Athenian].

"Demetrius nodded; . . . turning away. . . .

"Crazy?" persisted the Athenian. . . .

"No."

"King?"

"No," muttered Demetrius, . . .
"not a king."

"What is he, then?" . . .

"I don't know," mumbled Demetrius, . . . "but—he is something more important than a king" (*The Robe* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947], p. 74).

Jesus Christ is indeed more than a king; he is the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, the Author and Finisher of our faith, King of kings, Lord of lords, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (see Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 17:14).

That is what the gospel is all about. Without him, without his intervention in our behalf, we would be helpless in the face of Adam's transgression. We are indeed saved by grace "through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), or as Nephi wrote, "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

"All other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages" to the testimony of Jesus—his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 121).

A little girl, misquoting the twenty-third Psalm, put everything in perspective. She said: "The Lord is my shepherd. That's all I want!" What more could anyone want? What could be more desirable than to "look unto [Jesus] in every thought"? (D&C 6:36).

As we ponder our relationship to our Savior, may I paint some sketches of him that have helped me become acquainted with him and serve as standards by which I have tried to measure my life.

A pattern for our lives

He was born of Mary; he had the power to die. He was the firstborn of the Father, the Son of God; he had the power to live and the capacity to live perfectly. We know that Jesus "received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness" (D&C 93:13).

As a youth the Lord "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). During this growth process, he suffered "temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer" (Mosiah 3:7). He experienced all of these things "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). There is nothing we experience—no heartache or joy—that he has not experienced more intensely; and his response to such experiences was perfect. He thus established a pattern for our own lives.

During his mortal life, Jesus gave us his gospel and organized his Church. Jesus taught his disciples how to live more abundantly and showed us the way to happiness here and eternal life hereafter.

Miracles

He performed many miracles. They were "an important element in the work of Jesus Christ, being not only divine acts, but forming also a part of the divine teaching. . . . They were intended to be a proof to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. . . . The miracles of healing also show how the law of love is to deal with the actual facts of life. Miracles were and are a response to faith, and its best encouragement" (Bible Dictionary, "Miracles").

Recall the pathos in one of Christ's greatest miracles, the raising

of his friend Lazarus from the dead. The compassionate Savior responded to the pleas of his friends but also delayed his coming in order to use the occasion to teach. "I am glad for your sakes," he said, "that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe" (John 11:15).

The mourning Martha said with childlike faith:

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

"But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:21-25).

Mary expressed similar feelings: "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32). And Jesus, seeing her and others weeping, "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," and he himself wept (see John 11:33, 35). The depth of caring and compassion is remarkable and warmly inviting. Jesus, with the word of faith and power, said simply, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). And Lazarus did—a life restored and irrefutable evidence of Christ's divinity, forever established as a basis of faith.

Disciples of the living Christ

I exult with Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ has won the victory. Death is conquered; life—eternal life—reigns triumphant. We are disciples of the living Christ. Though his body was laid in a borrowed sepulcher, he was resurrected on the third day, appearing to many.

Imagine yourself in the company of the disciples and other believers on

the day of the Resurrection. Mere hours have passed since you witnessed the horrifying crucifixion of the gentle Nazarene. You have shared hopeless moments of profound sorrow. Confused, knowing not where to turn, how to act, your minds are clouded with mists of despair. Then two disciples join you with word that they have conversed with the Lord on the road to Emmaus. Dare you believe those who report, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"? (Luke 24:34).

Luke recorded this remarkable event:

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

"And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet" (Luke 24:36-40).

That scene lives in my heart, for it heralds immortality for all of us. It assures us of continued life after death free from mortal pain and sorrow.

His atonement

Jesus took upon himself the sins of all of us in Gethsemane and on the cross. He died that we might live. Who among us has not experienced the pain of sin? Who does not desperately need the balm of divine forgiveness to heal a wounded soul? Lehi taught his son Jacob:

"Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

"Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered" (2 Nephi 2:6-7).

His was a "great and last sacrifice," an "infinite and eternal sacrifice," which none but the sinless Son of God could effect (Alma 34:10).

The way to eternal life has been cleared by the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Why should we not accept the invitation to salvation as phrased by Peter, "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

His commission

"Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth" (2 Nephi 2:8). Jesus displayed a missionary zeal, a fervent desire that all the children of God enjoy the blessings of his gospel. Isn't it interesting that the last chapter of each of the Gospels contains an appeal from the risen Lord to spread the gospel.

On the wall of the main floor of the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City is a magnificent mural depicting Jesus Christ as a resurrected being standing among his eleven Apostles as he gives them a stirring charge to be missionaries to all the world:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Apostles who there stood with the Son of God responded to this call with faith, boldness, and power.

We read that they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). They had seen a resurrected being, had eaten with him, had felt his hands and feet. They knew, and knowing, they testified, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Does that commission extend to us as his disciples? Perhaps we have not seen in person the risen Lord. But the testimony of his chosen witnesses is etched into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We know, and knowing, we too must testify. Is there any question in the mind of any of us that this is one of the chief responsibilities we enjoy by reason of our membership in his Church? I began with Mormon's declaration: "I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life" (3 Nephi 5:13). Such is the calling of each of us.

Give yourself to Christ

What Christ desires from each of us is surrender, complete and total—a voluntary gift of trust, faith, and love. C. S. Lewis captured the spirit of this surrender:

"Christ says 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. . . . Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours'" (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943], p. 167).

I know that my Redeemer lives

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I express my willingness to so submit myself to my Savior because I trust him, I believe him, and I love him. I say with Job:

"I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ted E. Brewerton

My brethren and sisters, on this bright and beautiful day, I should like to address the subject of light. The dictionary defines light as something that makes vision possible or something that enlightens or informs.

Two types of light are physical light and spiritual light.

Physical light

Physical light, especially natural light, affects the moods of people. When summer's light begins to fade, days grow shorter, and the winter season looms darkly ahead, natural light becomes a more precious commodity, especially to people who live in extreme northern climates. There, where darkness reigns for up to three months a year and then summer blooms into three months of constant daylight, moods swing with the seasons.

Light does have a profound effect on human mood and behavior. Mounting evidence indicates that people who are feeling a little down and need a lift can get it by going outside in daylight. Walking in the light is a natural mood booster. Many who simply walk for half an hour or more during the daylight hours receive a distinct benefit. (See *The Walking Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 1989, pp. 28-30.)

Scientists are not entirely certain which wavelengths cause light's mood-boosting effects. Researchers believe that these effects are traceable to light taken in *through the eyes* and not through the skin.

A second medical use of light is light therapy for treating some cancers. Certain chemicals combined with light can destroy cancer cells. Research is under way to identify the best source of light and to determine how to direct it to body areas. (See *Time*, Canadian ed., Nov. 1989.)

Spiritual light

Shifting from these brief remarks about physical light, I should like to consider a kind of light that has infinitely greater power and effect. I speak of *spiritual light*. It comes from God and his gospel. In the scriptures, we find reference to a relationship between the physical light of the sun and spiritual light. We read in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, of "the light of truth;

"Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. . . .

"And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

"Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

"The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed" (D&C 88:6-7, 11-13).

This earth will be a celestial sphere like a sea of glass and fire. The prophet Brigham Young said: "It will not then be an opaque body as it now is, but it will be like the stars of the firmament, full of light and glory: it will be a *body of light*. John compared it, in its celestialized state, to a sea of glass" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:163; italics added).

In section 88 we read:

"And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law—

"Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it" (D&C 88:25–26).

In section 84:

"For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

"And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:45–46).

This word *light* appears 535 times in the scriptures.

Jesus is the Light of the world

Light has a relationship to the Son of God: "And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. Moroni said, "And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know *the light* by which ye may judge, *which light* is the *light of Christ*, see that ye do not

judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged" (Moroni 7:18; italics added).

John said, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, *I am the light of the world*: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12; italics added).

Our Lord is the Light of the world in at least three ways. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

"1. Through the Light of Christ he governs and controls the universe and gives life to all that therein is.

"2. By this same immensity-filling light—and also, to certain faithful ones, by the power of the Holy Ghost!—he enlightens the mind and quickens the understanding.

"3. By his own upright, sinless, and perfect course, in [premortal life], in mortality, and in resurrected glory, he sets a perfect example and is able to say to all men: 'Follow thou me.' (2 Ne. 31:10.)" (*The Promised Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], p. 208).

In the First Vision, *light* released the boy Joseph from oppressive darkness.

How do we receive light?

How does light enter into us? How do we receive it? "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23).

Commenting on this passage, Elder Bruce R. McConkie states: "Christ is the light; the gospel is the light; the plan of salvation is the light; 'that which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.' As the light of the sun enters the body *through our natural*

eyes, so the light of heaven—the light of the Spirit which illuminates our souls—enters through our spiritual eyes” (*The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979–81], 2:153; italics added).

We cannot live on borrowed light

President Joseph F. Smith said:

“One fault to be avoided by the Saints, young and old, is the tendency to live on *borrowed light*, with their own hidden under a bushel; to permit the savor of their salt of knowledge to be lost; and the light within them to be reflected, rather than original. . . .

“Men and women should become settled in the truth, and *founded in the knowledge of the gospel*, depending upon no person for borrowed or reflected light, but trusting only upon the Holy Spirit, who is ever the same, shining forever and testifying to the individual and the priesthood, who live in harmony with the laws of the gospel, of the glory and the will of the Father. They will then have light everlasting which cannot be obscured. By its shining in their lives, they shall cause others to glorify God; and by their well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 87–88; italics added).

Conversion of the Stewart family

Light persuades us to do good; it leads us to Christ. It led my family as it has led yours, and it can and will lead all to him.

Archibald Stewart and his wife, Esther Lyle, are my great-great-grandparents. The Stewart family had learned to face persecution and hardship. Their ancestors had been forced to flee from Scotland to Northern Ireland, where they had been promised

protection. But instead of finding peace, they again became victims of persecution at the hands of the Irish Greens. Independence and strong conviction were part of their heritage.

The Stewart family characteristics of love and devotion and a deep religious faith made them receptive to the gospel. When the Mormon missionaries came to the Stewart house, Elizabeth, the third child, immediately felt the truthfulness of their message. She began to study and search for more assurance of the things she felt within. Her feelings and study stirred an immediate response in her old granny, who was the matriarch of the Stewart household. Elizabeth spent many hours telling her granny about the new prophet of God, Joseph Smith, who had brought back to earth the simple, direct message that Christ was alive and had appeared to man. Elizabeth felt a testimony burning within and asked permission to be baptized. Because of the unpopularity of the Mormons, her parents objected. Elizabeth's granny came to her rescue. “Let the child alone,” she said. “I have read all her books, and I do believe the child is right.”

As Elizabeth left her home to go to her baptism, her granny was at her side. The two walked to the river, where the elders had broken a hole in the ice that wintry March day. When the elders came toward Elizabeth to baptize her, her granny stepped up and said, “Watch your manners, child; never step in front of your elders.”

The elders baptized Granny in her street clothes; she even had on her little white cap. She had brought no extra clothes, so she walked home in her wet, frozen clothes. She did not take cold even though she did not change her clothes until the other family members had gone to bed. She said nothing about her baptism to the family but went about her usual tasks as if nothing had happened. After the oth-

ers had gone to bed, she hung her clothing around the fireplace. In the morning when Archibald got up, he saw the clothes drying. He began to joke with the others about Granny having been dipped in the river along with Elizabeth. Granny listened to their fun and then said: "Archibald, if you don't want people to hear, stop shouting so loudly. You can't talk about Granny now, for she can hear better than any of you."

Granny had been virtually deaf for twenty years, but a miracle had restored her hearing at the time she was baptized. From that day until her death, she could hear distinctly. Archibald said laughingly that she heard too much.

Most of the family members soon were baptized in 1841.

The light of the gospel illuminates the path of life to eternity that otherwise would be dark and nondirecting.

We can be like a mirror and direct light even into dark places. We are not

the sources of light; nevertheless, through us light can be reflected to others.

I must return and report my stewardship and *my words* in the heavens when I leave this mortal life. Therefore, I testify with no hesitancy that God lives. Jesus is his holy Son, the One through whom we gain salvation. This is his Church and kingdom, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elders Robert L. Backman and Ted E. Brewerton of the Seventy have spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder George I. Cannon of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder George I. Cannon

Make each day a good day

"Behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation. . . . This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors" (Alma 34:31-32).

These words are as applicable to-day as when expressed by Amulek centuries ago.

Many years ago I clipped an article out of a newspaper. It tells about an elevator boy who was whistling a merry tune on his way up on the elevator one morning. "Why so happy?" a grim-faced, scowling rider asked him.

The boy replied, "I've never lived this day before."

The writer of the article comments: "This boy was wiser than his

years. The only life we can live is to-day. Yesterday is behind us. However golden the hours, they cannot be lived again, but only remembered. Tomorrow is before us, and however sweet its expectations, the clock must take its patient course before we can test our hope against reality. We can live no more than one day at a time" (Roy Pearson, *Words to Live By*).

Elder Richard L. Evans shared this meaningful thought in "The Spoken Word": "It sometimes seems that we live as if we wonder when life is going to begin. It isn't always clear just what we are waiting for, but some of us sometimes persist in waiting so long that life slips by—finding us still waiting for something that has been going

on all the time. . . . This is the life in which the work of this life is to be done. Today is as much a part of eternity as any day a thousand years ago or as will be any day a thousand years hence. This is it, whether we are thrilled or disappointed, busy or bored! This is life, and it is passing" ("The Spoken Word," *Improvement Era*, Jan. 1967, p. 65).

Today is a day of eternity. I hope each day we are thankful for life, for knowing that we are sons and daughters of God and that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is upon the earth. I hope we will have a desire and a determination to make each day a good day.

How can we do this? Here are some suggestions. I encourage you to add others.

Nourish faith and repent

Each day let us nourish our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us follow the inspired message from the Lord's living prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to read daily from the Book of Mormon and make a study of this book a lifetime pursuit (see Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 51). We can go to our Father in Heaven in individual prayer. We can kneel each day as a family. How very important it is that we do this. As we attend our meetings on the Sabbath and partake of the sacrament worthily, we can have our Father's Spirit with us every day.

Let us live daily the great saving principle of repentance. We will become more humble and teachable.

Follow the Savior

Each day will be a good day if we will think of the Savior and make Him the center of our lives, for He is "the light, and the life, and the truth of the

world" (Ether 4:12). Following the Savior will help us to be honest. I would like to tell you about a twelve-year-old boy in the Philippines who is following the Savior.

Julius had gone to school without eating any breakfast, and during class his stomach began to make funny sounds. During recess he hurried to a nearby barbecue stand. He took two sticks of meat, ate the food, and went back to class.

When he returned, he discovered he had not given the pesos for the food. Without hesitation he ran back and paid for his snack. When he arrived back at the classroom, he found a very angry teacher. He had forgotten to ask permission to leave. She wanted to know what he had been doing. He told her everything. Then she put her arm on his shoulder and, facing the class, said, "Class, I want you to be honest like Julius." She asked him why he returned the money when he could have kept it.

He answered, "Because I believe in being honest."

"What is your religion?" she wanted to know.

Without hesitation, he said, "I am a Mormon."

"Oh," she responded, "no wonder."

Julius is making each day a good day by always being honest.

Following the Savior will help us to be morally clean. We will respect our bodies and not tamper with drugs, alcohol, or pornography or in any way destroy the great miracle of life which the Lord has given to each of us.

Recently I listened to the words of a stalwart young teenager who told about how some young people in his school have not kept the standards of the Church and have used some of the destructive substances we have been warned against. Friends who know he is a Mormon have asked him why

he doesn't partake of these harmful things. He explained: "I am happy to know that I have not disappointed the Lord and dishonored the priesthood he has given me. Remember, you can lie to yourself, and you can lie to others, but you can never lie to the Lord. He knows what you are doing. . . . To help us along the way, a good guideline is to imagine that Jesus is right beside you all the time. Ask yourself, 'Would Jesus be doing this?' or 'Would He get into this situation?' " (talk given by Brandon Williams, Alamosa Colorado Stake conference, 25 Aug. 1991).

As the Savior becomes the center of our lives, we will be more loving and giving. He has taught by precept and example that if we would truly find ourselves, we must first lose ourselves in serving and helping others.

Serve in the kingdom

I believe one of the best ways to make each day a good one is to help build the kingdom of God. What a blessing it is for each of us to be leaders in righteousness. President Spencer W. Kimball has said, "Membership in the Church is a call to leadership." Let us be good leaders in our homes (this means both children and parents), leaders in our neighborhoods, our schools, our communities, and the Church.

Be happy with ourselves

Each day can be richer and more meaningful if we can be happy with ourselves. Some of the most undesirable feelings are those of envying, coveting, and wishing that we were someone else. We should be grateful for who we are and what we are, and for the talents we have been given. We should be supportive of and grateful for the talents of others, always looking for those divine qualities which are in every person we meet. It is important

that we be ourselves and like ourselves. Someone has said, "A bee may not be an eagle, but it can sure make honey!"

Don't worry

Here is another suggestion: Don't worry about those things which you cannot change. If something can be done, do it. If nothing can be done, don't worry about it. Several years ago, I read an article written about Elder LeGrand Richards. He had just turned age ninety-three. Someone asked him what his secret was for living such a long, happy, and useful life. He said:

"One of my secrets is I don't do a lot of worrying. Some people worry but I have a little slogan that goes like this:

"For every worry under the sun, there is a remedy, or there is none;

"If there be one, hurry and find it, if there be none, never mind it" ("Beloved Elder Richards Recovering," *Church News*, 31 Mar. 1979, p. 4).

Work diligently

I have one more suggestion. I share this counsel from President Ezra Taft Benson: "If we want to keep the Spirit, we must work. There is no greater exhilaration or satisfaction than to know, after a hard day of work, that we have done our best. . . . Ours is a gospel of work—purposeful, unselfish and rendered in the spirit of the true love of Christ" (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], pp. 483–84).

Each day is a day of eternity

Each day we live is a day of eternity.

Let us make each day a good day by—

- Nourishing faith.
- Growing through repentance.
- Following the Savior.
- Serving in the kingdom.

- Being happy with ourselves.
- Not worrying.
- Working diligently.

I pray, with Alma, that each day we would “humble [our]selves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that [we] may not be tempted above that which [we] can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

“Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that [we] shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in [our] hearts, that [we] may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest” (Alma 13:28–29).

Expressions of gratitude

Today, my heart is full of gratitude as my service as a Seventy comes to a close.

I am grateful for my good wife, Isabel, who has so lovingly and unselfishly served by my side and whose example has shown me how to make each day a good one. I express thanks to our children and their eternal companions and our grandchildren for their support, steadfastness, and righteousness.

I have learned from the examples of the First Presidency and the Council

of the Twelve the meaning of discipleship to the Savior.

With the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric, I have shared the joy of brotherhood.

To all the members and missionaries with whom I have been privileged to serve in Asia, the Philippines, Micronesia and Guam, Great Britain, and the Southwest Area of the United States, I say thank you. You are examples of making every day a good day.

Above all, I express my gratitude and love to my Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the life, light, and truth of the world. I leave my witness that He is our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “Nearer, My God, to Thee” without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder George I. Cannon of the Seventy has given us that sound advice and that stirring testimony, and the Mormon Youth Chorus sang that grand old hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My brethren and sisters, I’m sure that all of us have been honored to be in the presence of President Ezra Taft Benson, the President of the Church, our prophet. I’ve loved him and respected him all of my life, as I’m sure you have.

Fruits of the gospel

Throughout the ages, the Lord has referred to his people, those who love

him and keep his commandments, in words that set them apart. He has called them a “peculiar treasure” (Exodus 19:5), a “special people” (Deuteronomy 7:6), “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). Scriptures refer to such people as Saints. As the Savior taught, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

In sharp contrast to those who live by gospel principles, I see accounts of people who either ignore or don’t un-

derstand these principles. Some do not live the gospel standards and live in sin, evil, dishonesty, and crime. The result is untold misery, pain, suffering, and sorrow.

I am reminded of the Savior's teachings when he declared:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

This analogy teaches us an important lesson. We cannot have the fruits of the gospel without its roots. Through revelation, the Lord has established those roots—distinctive principles of the fulness of the gospel. They give us direction. The Lord has taught us how we should build our lives on a solid foundation, like a rock, that will withstand the temptations and storms of life.

May I give you some of the major principles of the gospel.

The Godhead

One distinctive principle is a true concept of the nature of the Godhead: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). The Godhead consists of three separate, distinct personages who are one in purpose. The Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone, while the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit.

God truly is our Father, the Father of the spirits of all mankind. We are his literal offspring and are formed in his image. We have inherited divine characteristics from him. Knowing our relationship to our Heavenly Father helps us understand the divine nature that is in us and our potential. The doctrine of the fatherhood of God lays a solid foundation for self-esteem. The hymn titled "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) states this doctrine in simple terms. Can a person who understands his divine parenthood lack self-esteem? I have known people who have a deep, abiding assurance of this truth and others who understand it only superficially and intellectually. The contrast in their attitudes and the practical effect of these attitudes in their lives are remarkably apparent.

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the firstborn Son of God in the spirit and the Only Begotten Son in the flesh gives a far more noble and majestic view of him than if he were just a great teacher or philosopher. He is our Lord, the Redeemer of all mankind, our Mediator with the Father. Because of his love for us, he has atoned for the sins of the world and has provided a way for the faithful to return to our Heavenly Father's presence.

"He is the greatest Being to be born on this earth—the perfect example. . . . He is Lord of lords, King of kings, the Creator, the Savior, the God of the whole earth. . . . His name . . . is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved.

"He will come again in power and glory to dwell on the earth, and will stand as Judge of all mankind at the last day" (Bible Dictionary, "Christ").

He stands as the head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We should be everlastingly grateful to him. We should love him with all our hearts and should follow his example.

The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, is a revelator (see *History of the Church*, 6:58); he reveals the word of God. He provides the convincing witness that the gospel is true and gives a person a testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He guides us in our choices and in our search for truth.

Resurrection

Next I turn to our assurance of a literal resurrection, the uniting after mortal death of the spirit with a body of flesh and bone. Jesus, the first on this earth to be resurrected, made the Resurrection a certainty for all mankind. This reality is a center point of hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:19–22).

I have seen the contrast between those who have spiritual confidence in the Resurrection and others who are confused and uncertain about our post-mortal condition. I was inspired by one mother who faced the untimely death of a two-year-old daughter with serenity, despite her deep sorrow. She attributed the peace she felt to her faith in a merciful God and in life everlasting. She was confident that this sweet child was encompassed in the arms of God's love and that she and her daughter would be together again.

Parenting

In the Lord's plan, parents are to teach their children during the impressionable and formative years when they develop attitudes and habits that last a lifetime. President Brigham Young wisely recognized that "the time of youth and early manhood is the proper time" to gain mastery over bodily appetites and passions. He warned that "the man who suffers his passions to lead him becomes a slave to them, and such a man will find the work of emancipation an exceedingly difficult one"

(*Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, ed. Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 130). We can be so grateful for principles that provide positive, spiritual reinforcement for parental teachings and that direct young people away from the pitfalls that Satan has strewn along the path of adolescence and young adulthood.

Word of Wisdom

The Word of Wisdom was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833. This revelation has been scrutinized and ignored, attacked and defended, ridiculed and praised. Meanwhile, faithful Saints have observed it as a token of their obedience to God. For many years, they could obey it only on faith, in much the same spirit that Adam offered sacrifice. An angel asked him, "Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6). Early members of the Church obeyed the Lord's counsel without the benefit of present medical knowledge, which has validated the physical benefits of their obedience. We now know by scientific evidence what the Saints have known by revelation for 158 years.

Imagine the results we would see if the total populace were to live this law of health and never abuse their bodies with alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and other harmful substances. What magnitude of decline would we see in automobile accidents, illness and premature death, fetal defects, crime, squandered dollars, broken homes, and wasted lives resulting from alcohol and other addictive drugs? How much would lung cancer, heart disease, and other ailments caused by cigarette smoking decrease? The fruits of this commandment bring innumerable blessings.

Members of the Church have obviously been blessed with health and spirituality by being obedient to this commandment.

Welfare principles

A sure indicator of true religion is a concern for the poor of the earth. This leads us to provide for their needs by acts of charity. I quote James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep . . . unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Stated simply, charity means subordinating our interests and needs to those of others, as the Savior has done for all of us. The Apostle Paul wrote that of faith, hope, and charity, "the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13), and Moroni wrote that "except ye have charity ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God" (Moroni 10:21). I believe that selfless service is a distinctive part of the gospel. As President Spencer W. Kimball said, welfare service "is not a program, but the essence of the gospel. *It is the gospel in action*. It is the crowning principle of a Christian life" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp. 123-24; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 77).

The Church does substantial but perhaps little-known humanitarian work in many places in the world. Our ability to reach out to others is made possible only to the extent that we are self-reliant. When we are self-reliant, we will use material blessings we receive from God to take care of ourselves and our families and be in a position to help others.

Comment on the principle of self-reliance may seem merely to echo the obvious, but it runs counter to the trends in our society that shift responsibility to others. Many Saints have been spared suffering because they have lived by this principle.

The foundation of self-reliance is hard work. Parents should teach their children that work is the prerequisite to achievement and success in every worthwhile endeavor. Children of legal age should secure productive employment and begin to move away from dependence on parents. None of us should expect others to provide for us that which we can provide for ourselves.

Missionary work

Missionary work was a distinct part of the Savior's mortal ministry. This is also true today. The Savior commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). His disciples, especially Paul, proclaimed the gospel message widely in the years following the Savior's crucifixion. In 1831 the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated" (D&C 1:2).

Today more than 44,000 missionaries are working to fulfill the divine mandate to preach the gospel. They bless the people they teach by acquainting them with the fulness of the restored gospel. They bless themselves by the dramatic growth and maturity that come during a mission. Every worthy young man should go on a mission. Also, worthy young women and couples of the Church can give invaluable service in the mission field. They all serve as the emissaries of the Lord. We thank them most sincerely.

Chastity

Another distinctive characteristic of the gospel is the adherence to the Lord's law of chastity. From ancient

times to the present, the Lord has commanded his people to obey this law. Such strict morality may seem peculiar or outdated in our day when the media portrays pornography and immorality as being normal and fully acceptable. Remember, the Lord has never revoked the law of chastity.

Temple marriage vows increase the depth of faithfulness between husband and wife.

Obedience to the law of chastity would diminish cries for abortion and would go a long way toward controlling sexually transmitted disease. Total fidelity in marriage would eliminate a major cause of divorce, with its consequent pain and sadness inflicted especially upon innocent children.

Of course, members of the Church have their share of faults and weaknesses, but we see abundant evidence that living the gospel does help the Saints to become better. As more people commit themselves to living the gospel with all their heart, might, mind, and strength, they will be examples to their families and friends.

How blessed we are to understand and to have the privilege of living by the sacred, eternal principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are true. They will lead us along the only safe course to happiness, which is "the object and design of our existence" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 255).

Advice and promise

In conclusion, let me offer this advice and promise. Never be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Partake of the sacrament worthily. Always remember our Lord and Savior. Never defame his sacred name. Do not ridi-

cule the sacredness of the holy priesthood and the ordinances of the gospel. If you honor this counsel, the spirit of rebellion will never come into your hearts. You will be blessed as was Alma, who said:

"I have labored without ceasing . . . that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste. . . .

"Yea, . . . the Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors;

"For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted" (Alma 36:24-26).

In addition, if you will sustain the Lord's anointed, your confidence in them will wax strong. Your families and your posterity will be blessed and strengthened. The abundant fruits of the gospel will enrich your lives. Peace and unity will fill your hearts and homes.

My brothers and sisters, your leaders of the Church love you and labor to bring you the fruits of the gospel that you may taste as we have tasted. May you feel that marvelous joy of God's love and his blessings in your life I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang "Shout the Glad Tidings" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Shout the Glad Tidings."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

President Howard W. Hunter

The gospel is for all people

The gospel of Jesus Christ, which gospel we teach and the ordinances of which we perform, is a global faith with an all-embracing message. It is neither confined nor partial nor subject to history or fashion. Its essence is universally and eternally true. Its message is for all the world, restored in these latter days to meet the fundamental needs of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people on the earth. It has been established again as it was in the beginning—to build brotherhood, to preserve truth, and to save souls.

Brigham Young once said about such a broad and stimulating concept of religion: "For me, the plan of salvation must . . . circumscribe [all] the knowledge that is upon the face of the earth, or it is not from God. Such a plan incorporates every system of true doctrine on the earth, whether it be ecclesiastical, moral, philosophical, or civil: it incorporates all good laws that have been made from the days of Adam until now; it swallows up the laws of nations, for it exceeds them all in knowledge and purity; it circumscribes the doctrines of the day, and takes from the right and the left, and brings all truth together in one system, and leaves the chaff to be scattered hither and thither" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:148).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge the circle of love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind.

The human race is one family

In the message of the gospel, the entire human race is one family de-

scended from a single God. All men and women have not only a physical lineage leading back to Adam and Eve, their first earthly parents, but also a spiritual heritage leading back to God the Eternal Father. Thus, all persons on earth are literally brothers and sisters in the family of God.

It is in understanding and accepting this universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best appreciate God's concern for them and their relationship to each other. This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent. We have a divine pedigree; every person is a spiritual child of God.

In this gospel view there is no room for a contracted, narrow, or prejudicial view. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" (*History of the Church*, 4:227).

In 1907 the First Presidency presented to the general conference a declaration which includes this statement: "Our motives are not selfish; our purposes not petty and earth-bound; we contemplate the human race, past, present and yet to come, as immortal beings, for whose salvation it is our mission to labor; and to this work, broad as eternity and deep as the love of God, we devote ourselves, now, and forever" ("An Address: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the World," appendix to Conference Report, Apr. 1907, p. 16).

In the gospel view, no man is alien. No one is to be denied. There is no underlying excuse for smugness, arrogance, or pride. Openly scorning the pettiness and intolerance of rival religious groups, the Prophet Joseph Smith said in an editorial:

"While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes 'His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, 'according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,' or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India" (*History of the Church*, 4:595-96).

God gives truth to all men

Mormonism, so-called, is a world religion, not simply because its members are now found throughout the world, but chiefly because it has a comprehensive and inclusive message based upon the acceptance of all truth, restored to meet the needs of all mankind.

We believe there is a spiritual influence that emanates from "the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" (D&C 88:12). All men share an inheritance of divine light. God operates among his children in all nations, and those who seek God are entitled to further light and knowledge, regardless of their race, nationality, or cultural traditions.

Elder Orson F. Whitney, in a conference address, explained that many

great religious leaders were inspired. He said:

"[God] is using not only his covenant people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves. . . .

"All down the ages men bearing the authority of the Holy Priesthood—patriarchs, prophets, apostles and others, have officiated in the name of the Lord, doing the things that he required of them; and outside the pale of their activities other good and great men, not bearing the Priesthood, but possessing profundity of thought, great wisdom, and a desire to uplift their fellows, have been sent by the Almighty into many nations, to give them, not the fulness of the Gospel, but that portion of truth that they were able to receive and wisely use" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1921, pp. 32-33).

An inclusive approach toward nonmembers

The restored gospel is a message of divine love for all people everywhere, based upon the conviction that all humans are children of the same God. This primary religious message was beautifully expressed in a statement of the First Presidency on February 15, 1978, as follows:

"Based upon ancient and modern revelation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gladly teaches and declares the Christian doctrine that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not only by blood relationship from common mortal progenitors but also as literal spirit children of an Eternal Father."

Latter-day Saints have a positive and inclusive approach toward others who are not of our faith. We believe they are literally our brothers and sisters, that we are sons and daughters of

the same Heavenly Father. We have a common genealogy leading back to God. But more than that, we also seek the true and the beautiful wherever it may be found. And we know that God has blessed all his children with goodness and light in accordance with the conditions in which they find themselves.

In our humble efforts to build brotherhood and to teach revealed truth, we say to the people of the world what President George Albert Smith so lovingly suggested:

"We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. We have not come here to berate you because of things you have not done; but we have come here as your brethren . . . and to say to you: 'Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father' " (*Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948], pp. 12-13).

Ours is a perennial religion

In summary, then, the validity, the power of our faith is not bound by history, nationality, or culture. It is not the peculiar property of any one people or any one age. As Joseph Smith once said, it is "above the king-

doms of the world" (*History of the Church*, 5:526).

Ours is a perennial religion based on eternal, saving truth. Its message of love and brotherhood is lodged in scripture and in the revelations of the Lord to his living prophet. It embraces all truth. It circumscribes all wisdom—all that God has revealed to man and all that he will yet reveal. Of that eternal revelation I bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, for your wise and inspired words.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable and satellite systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The Mormon Youth Chorus will now sing "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold," and the benediction will then be given by Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "What Glorious Scenes Mine Eyes Behold."

Elder Richard P. Lindsay offered the benediction.

FIRST DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 5, 1991, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second

Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by the Missionary Training Center mixed choir. Douglas Brenchley conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television and who was with us at the opening session this morning.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance and to all who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission. We express appreciation to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems for their cooperation in making these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Lloyd P. George, and Robert

K. Dellenbach are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall next door.

The music for this session will be provided by the Missionary Training Center mixed choir, under the direction of Brother Douglas Brenchley, with Brother Richard Elliott at the organ.

This splendid choir will begin this session by singing the favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball, "I Need Thee Every Hour." The invocation will be offered by Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Joe J. Christensen offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Called to Serve," after which President Gordon B. Hinckley will present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "Called to Serve."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Thank you for the beautiful music. I shall now present to you the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may

manifest it. Those opposed may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

Since April conference Elders Han In Sang, Stephen D. Nadauld, and Sam K. Shimabukuro have accepted calls to serve as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in sustaining these Brethren in these callings, please manifest it. Any who may feel otherwise.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities for the past 5½ years, it is proposed that we release the following as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, and Gardner H. Russell. These Brethren have rendered tremendous faithful, devoted, and unselfish service. All who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release Elder LeGrand R. Curtis as First Counselor and Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency and that we release Elder H. Verlan Andersen as First Counselor and Elder Rulon G.

Craven as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All who wish to express appreciation for these Brethren may do so.

It is also proposed that we sustain Elder Robert K. Dellenbach as First Counselor and Elder Stephen D. Nadauld as Second Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency and that we sustain Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., as First Counselor and Elder Clinton L. Cutler as Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency. All in favor please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, our beloved brothers and sisters, for your continued vote of love and confidence.

President Monson

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

He will then be followed by Elder Julio E. Dávila of the Seventy.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Spiritual communication comes as a feeling

A testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a witness that the Book of Mormon is true, comes in a delicate, refined spiritual communication. It is described in the scriptures as light (see D&C 88:11, 67), as burning in the bosom. It is best described as a *feeling* (see 1 Nephi 17:45).

Ordinarily a testimony comes when we seek for it with a sincere heart and real intent (see Moroni 10:4). "If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive reve-

lation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal" (D&C 42:61).

No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways than "Ask, and ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22; James 4:3; 1 John 3:22; 1 Nephi 15:11; Enos 1:15; Mosiah 4:21; D&C 4:7; and Moses 6:52 are examples.) While we may invite this communication, it can *never* be forced! If we try to force it, we may be deceived.

Enos, who was "struggling in the spirit," said, "Behold, the voice of the Lord came into my *mind*" (Enos 1:10; italics added). While this spiritual communication comes into the *mind*, it comes more as a feeling, an impression, than simply as a thought. Unless you have experienced it, it is very difficult to describe that delicate process.

The witness is not communicated through the intellect alone, however bright the intellect may be.

"The natural man," Paul told us, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:13-14).

Both the intellect and the spirit

Recently the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Apostles issued a statement alerting members of the Church to the dangers of participating in circles which concentrate on doctrine and ordinances and measure them by the intellect alone.

If doctrines and behavior are measured by the intellect alone, the essential spiritual ingredient is missing, and we will be misled.

Personal testimony is confirmed to us initially and is reaffirmed and enlarged thereafter through a harmonious combining of both the intellect and the spirit.

A testimony is profoundly personal and occurs in response to very private prayers and pleadings. Nevertheless, the Lord has told us, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20; see also D&C 6:32).

There is safety in learning doctrine in gatherings which are sponsored by proper authority. Some members, even some who have made covenants in the temple, are associating with groups of one kind or another which

have an element of secrecy about them and which pretend to have some higher source of inspiration concerning the fulfillment of prophecies than do ward or stake leaders or the General Authorities of the Church. Know this: There are counterfeit revelations which, we are warned, "shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22).

The Lord commanded: "Assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves. . . . Continue in prayer and fasting. . . . Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. . . . And my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand" (D&C 88:74-80).

Reverence and revelation

When we meet to learn the doctrines of the gospel, it should be in a spirit of reverence. It is about *reverence* and how it relates to *revelation* that I wish to speak.

Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. Such words as *quiet*, *still*, *peaceable*, *Comforter* abound in the scriptures: "Be *still*, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10; italics added). And the promise, "You shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the *peaceable* things of the kingdom" (D&C 36:2; italics added).

Elijah felt a great wind, an earthquake, a fire. The Lord was not in any of them; then came "a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12).

Helaman said of that voice of revelation: "It was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul" (Helaman 5:30).

It was Nephi who reminded his brothers that an angel "hath spoken

unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words" (1 Nephi 17:45; italics added).

For the past several years we have watched patterns of reverence and irreverence in the Church. While many are to be highly commended, we are drifting. We have reason to be deeply concerned.

The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Raucous music, with obscene lyrics blasted through amplifiers while lights flash psychedelic colors, characterizes the drug culture. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth.

Doctors even say that our physical sense of hearing can be permanently damaged by all of this noise.

This trend to more noise, more excitement, more contention, less restraint, less dignity, less formality is not coincidental nor innocent nor harmless.

The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.

Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit.

Reverence in Sunday meetings

Our sacrament and other meetings need renewed attention to assure that they are truly worship services in which members may be spiritually nourished and have their testimonies replenished and in which investigators may feel the inspiration essential to spiritual conversion.

Our meetinghouses are designed so that we may enjoy socials, dancing,

drama, even sports. All of these are important. But these auxiliary activities should be subdued when compared with what the world is doing. Music, dress, and conduct associated with them are quite different from what is appropriate in the chapel or classroom on the Sabbath day.

When we return for Sunday meetings, the music, dress, and conduct should be appropriate for worship. Foyers are built into our chapels to allow for the greeting and chatter that are typical of people who love one another. However, when we step into the chapel, we *must!*—each of us *must!*—watch ourselves lest we be guilty of intruding when someone is struggling to feel delicate spiritual communications.

Leaders sometimes wonder why so many active members get themselves into such predicaments in life. Could it be that they do not feel what they need to feel because our meetings are less than they might be spiritually?

Irreverent conduct in our chapels is worthy of a reminder, if not reproof. Leaders should teach that reverence invites revelation.

The reverence we speak of does not equate with absolute silence. We must be tolerant of little babies, even an occasional outburst from a toddler being ushered out to keep him from disturbing the peace. Unless the father is on the stand, he should do the ushering.

Music in worship services

Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them.

Music can set an atmosphere of worship which invites that spirit of revelation, of testimony. We are told in

the handbook that "music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for a Latter-day Saint meeting" (*General Handbook of Instructions*, 1989, p. 2-5) and that "organs and pianos are the standard instruments used in sacrament meetings. Other instruments, such as orchestral strings, may be used when appropriate, but the music must be in keeping with the reverence and spirituality of the meeting. Brass and percussion instruments generally are not appropriate" (*Handbook for Church Music*, p. 17).

An organist who has the sensitivity to quietly play prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom. If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!

I have noticed that an increasing number of our leaders and members do not sing the congregational songs. Perhaps they do not know them or there are not enough hymnbooks. We should sing the songs of Zion—they are an essential part of our worship. We must not neglect the hymns nor the exalted anthems of the Restoration. Read the First Presidency's introduction in the hymnbook. The Lord said, "My soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads" (D&C 25:12). Do not let our sacred music slip away from us, nor allow secular music to replace it.

When music is presented which, however appropriate for other occasions, does not fit the Sabbath, much is lost. From the *Bulletin*: "Some religiously oriented music in a popular style can be uplifting and motivating for some of our members but may lack the dignity and propriety suitable for a worship service. Also, music which

might be suitable in a concert setting may not be appropriate for a worship service" (*Bulletin*, Sept. 1986, p. 1).

A choir which favors secular music above sacred music on the Sabbath becomes a chorus. In that respect, they teach the ways of men and, in doing so, miss the opportunity to inspire and deny the power that they might otherwise have. The Spirit does not ratify speech nor confirm music which lacks spiritual substance.

Now, someone will surely write to remind me that I have not been trained as a musician and will tell me of the stimulation that comes to them from listening to the great music of the world. I understand that. But not all great music nor all popular religious music meets the special criteria of the sacred music of worship, of the Sabbath, of revelation.

There is something else: We are drifting from the use of reverential words in our prayers. Familiar terms such as *you* and *yours* are replacing *thee* and *thine* in prayer. Teach the children and gently inform new members that we use reverential terms when addressing our Heavenly Father in prayer.

Increase in spiritual power

No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration. The spirit of reverence can and should be evident in every organization in the Church and in the lives of every member.

Parents, stake presidencies, bishops, auxiliary leaders, teachers: Maintain a spirit of reverence in meetings; encourage participation in congregational singing and the use of reverential terms in prayers.

While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the

life of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems without all the counseling which we seem now to need.

It was Nephi who taught: "Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

"Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

"For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3-5).

And in the spirit of reverence, I bear testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the Holy Ghost—our comforter, our teacher—will come to us if we will maintain a spirit of reverence, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Packer, for that much-needed counsel.

Elders Julio E. Dávila and Graham W. Doxey, who were sustained at April conference as members of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Julio E. Dávila

Elder Dávila's conversion

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is very significant for me to follow Elder Boyd K. Packer this afternoon because just twenty-three years ago, his son Alan, then a missionary in Colombia, arrived with his companion to our home in Bogotá. That was our first contact with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Today I want to pay tribute to the missionaries, their parents and supporters, and to the leaders and members of the Church who, with their love and patience, made it possible for my wife, Mary, and me to join the Church and who continue supporting us in the process of conversion.

At the time the missionaries came to teach us, I was going through some trials and had many sorrows and concerns, and I needed to make some important decisions in my life. However, at the beginning I was not aware that their message of the restoration of

the gospel of Jesus Christ and of his Church was the answer and solution to my needs. I didn't realize that those young messengers were sent to me by my Heavenly Father.

Now I understand his mercy because he sent to us his Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who through the miracle of his atonement sacrificed his life for our salvation, broke the bands of death, defied the grave, and invited us to follow him.

Somehow it was not easy for them to start teaching us, but after many visits and discussions I was touched by the Spirit, and I agreed to be baptized, as well as my beloved wife. But I established some "don'ts" or conditions: don't call me "brother"; I will not attend all the meetings; I don't want to be assigned to pray nor to give talks in the meetings; I will not accept any callings; and never ask me to talk to my relatives or friends about the Church; and so forth.

Conversion is a process

I testify that conversion is a process. I am sure that the missionaries were praying and fasting for the change of my mind because as soon as we started to attend the meetings, I began criticizing many temporal things at the meetinghouse, such as the crooked pictures on the walls. The branch president, a fine and wise man, appointed me as the pictures supervisor, this being my first calling in the Church. Incidentally, I have never seen that position in the handbooks, but it served me very well to start my involvement in the service of the Lord.

My advice to leaders, members, and new converts looking for retention and reactivation is to let every man and woman participate in the preparation of this world for the second coming of our Savior; receive with joy the callings and releases that come from the Lord through inspired leaders; be co-workers with God in "bring[ing] to pass the immortality and eternal life of man," as we learn in Moses 1:39. We must be sure that all the people are having the opportunity to give of their time, talents, skills, and facilities to help others find the truth.

My first encounter with preaching the gospel was also exciting. In a park near my office in Bogotá, I saw a multitude, and since I had some time, I went down to see what was happening. My surprise was great when I saw the missionaries with displays about the Church and with copies of the Book of Mormon. They recognized me and asked me to stand in the middle of the park with a banner saying, "Be happy; be a Mormon." I stood for a while in that place. I was a Mormon, but at that moment I was not so happy! But I started to feel better about my ability as a missionary, losing my fear to talk with people about the Church. I let go of my own restrictions—so many "don'ts,"—and realized that this is the

Church of love and service, of sacrifice and blessings, of happiness and eternal life. My message to the missionaries, to the people that are investigating the Church at this time, and to the members is, "Don't give up; continue looking for the best results in this wonderful work."

After our baptism, many relatives, including our parents, several brothers and sisters and their families, followed our example and joined the Church, serving in priesthood and auxiliary leadership positions, serving full-time missions, and performing ordinances of salvation and exaltation for our kindred dead and for ourselves.

Eighteen years ago my wife and I were sealed in eternal marriage in the Salt Lake Temple, and the following year we were sealed as a family with our daughters, Liana and Maritza, in the Los Angeles Temple. For all these things, I express my gratitude to my Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Conversion is understanding truth

I can say with President Harold B. Lee: "As you can see, one is converted when he sees with his eyes what he ought to see; when he hears with his ears what he ought to hear; and when he understands with his heart what he ought to understand. And what he ought to see, hear, and understand is truth—eternal truth—and then practice it. That is conversion" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 92).

President Ezra Taft Benson, at an area conference in Sweden in 1974, said: "It is not on the pinnacle of success and ease where men and women grow most. It is often down in the valley of heartache and disappointment and reverses where men and women grow into strong characters" (in Conference Report, Denmark, Finland,

Norway, and Sweden Area Conference 1974, p. 70).

I know the meaning of repentance and forgiveness as part of the process of conversion through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I have partaken of the blessings stated in Moroni, chapter 6, verses 1 to 4:

"And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.

"Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

"And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the

people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith."

Brothers and sisters, I testify to you that God lives and loves us; that he sent to the world his Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer; that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God who was foreordained and raised up for the restoration of all things in this dispensation; that President Ezra Taft Benson is our living prophet, appointed by the Lord to guide us in the true Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that the Book of Mormon and the Bible are testaments of Christ, the Messiah. That we may see, hear, and understand these things and practice them, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Graham W. Doxey

My brothers and sisters, I am humbled as I face this new responsibility. However, I am encouraged with the warm and strong brotherhood I feel from these Brethren seated here.

My experiences include, like Nephi, "having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught" (1 Nephi 1:1). Next I was blessed to marry a beautiful wife, a queenly saint; therefore, I am receiving some secondary education. My internship training started as we were blessed with children. And our wonderful grandchildren have become our postgraduate education. It is my prayer and my trust in this regard that, once gained, "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18).

The voice is still small

President Spencer W. Kimball, a man with unique experience in all levels of Church leadership, described the subject that has been on my mind since this speaking assignment came. I apologize to Elder Packer. I realize that I was prompted by the Spirit—I know that he is—and I have found my thoughts going in much the same direction that his went. President Kimball said:

"The burning bushes, the smoking mountains, . . . the Cumorahs, and the Kirtlands were realities; but they were the exceptions. The great volume of revelation came to Moses and to Joseph and comes to today's prophet in

the less spectacular way—that of deep impressions, without spectacle or glamour or dramatic events.

“Always expecting the spectacular, many will miss entirely the constant flow of revealed communication” (in Conference Report, Munich Germany Area Conference 1973, p. 77).

Dramatic and miraculous answers to prayer may come, but they are the exceptions. Even at the highest levels of responsibility in this kingdom of God which is being built up upon the earth, *the voice is still small*.

In the Bible we read of the account of an earlier prophet who was rejected and discouraged. The word of the Lord came to Elijah when the children of Israel had forsaken their covenant and thrown down altars and slain prophets. He was told to “go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

“And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11–12).

Listening is a challenge today

My testimony is that the Lord *is* speaking to you! But with the deafening decibels of today’s environment, all too often we fail to hear him. I remember as a youth having the experience of being in company with an older man who had lost much of his hearing ability. He had no hearing aid and was continually asking that we speak louder so that he could be part of the conversation. He would say, “Talk louder; speak up; I can’t hear you.”

That was before the days of television and CDs and boomers and

blasters. I was interested in someone’s observation: “With TV and radio and tapes, what young person has time to listen to reason?” Listening is a challenge for us all today.

Time to listen. The *ability* to listen. The *desire* to listen. On religious matters, too many of us are saying, “What did you say? Speak up; I can’t hear you.” And when he doesn’t *shout* back, or cause the bush to burn, or write us a message in stone with his finger, we are inclined to think he doesn’t listen, doesn’t care about us. Some even conclude there is no God.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, “Every common bush [is] afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes” (*Aurora Leigh*, book 7, lines 822–23).

The questions are not “Does God live? Does God love me? Does God speak to me?” The critical question is, “Are you listening to him?” Have you removed your shoes? It is the same for you as it was for Elijah, as it is with the modern-day prophets: *The still, small voice is still small*.

Aids to our hearing are available. How can we filter out the heavy decibels of darkness that surround us? Let me mention three of the more obvious ones.

Revitalize your weekly worship

Number 1: Revitalize your weekly worship. When you sing the hymns, for instance, ponder the meaning of the words, enjoy the spirit of the music. Sing with enthusiasm without regard to your tones. You will have a good feeling, and your spirit will be enlivened; and as you join with the Saints in the songs of the heart, the Lord promises to answer this with blessings upon your head (see D&C 25:12).

Next, *partake* of the sacrament. Don’t merely *take* the sacrament.

Think of the covenants you are re-making. Truly witness unto the Father that you will take upon yourself the name of his Son, even Jesus Christ. Recommit yourself to always remember him, to keep the commandments which he has given you. Your obedience will entitle you to have his Spirit to be with you. If this sacred ordinance has become commonplace in your worship, if you let your mind wander elsewhere during this weekly opportunity for spiritual renewal, if you just *take* the bread and water as it passes with no thought or recommitment in your life, then you have turned off a significant aid to your hearing.

Pray to know God's will

Number 2: Pray to know God's will, not to "get things." Too often, because of our selfish desires, after a cursory "Thank you, Lord," we consume our prayer time in the listing of things we want, even of things we think we need. We must be willing to release the death grip which we have on things, which have become as a security blanket in our lives. Count the many hundreds of needed missionary couples who would be serving in the field if that firm grip on the familiarities of home and of children and grandchildren could be loosened. The Lord is prepared to perform the miracle that will follow, which miracle is that both they and you will survive, even grow, with an eighteen-month separation.

We must learn to pray with meaning, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." When you are able to do this, his whisperings to you will be loud and clear. The Prophet Joseph Smith, after five months of extreme suffering in the dungeon of Liberty Jail, experienced it, and he said, "When the heart is *sufficiently contrite*, then the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My

son, peace be unto thy soul" (*History of the Church*, 3:293; italics added).

Immerse yourself in the scriptures

Hearing aid number 3 has to do with the scriptures. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord tells us that he speaks to us through the scriptures. Of course, just reading words without our minds being centered on the message is not really listening. In section 18 we read:

"And I, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it.

"These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man:

"For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, . . .

"Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (18:33-36).

And thus, what to many seems to be the monologue of prayer actually becomes a dialogue with God as we immerse ourselves in the scriptures.

The Lord is speaking to you

As it was with Elijah, so it is today. God is not in the earthquake nor in the winds and fires of war, but he speaks to us in a voice that is small. With President Kimball, I, too, testify that it is this constant flow of revealed communication which continues to direct this Church through our prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, and through his Counselors, and through the Twelve Apostles. It comes to the Seventy and to the Presiding Bishop. It comes to the stake presidents, and to the bishops and to the quorum and Church officers throughout the world. It speaks to our missionaries; it comes to heads of families. I further witness that this still, small voice is speaking personally to you.

Please be *still* and *listen!* The Psalmist said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

I know that he lives. He loves you. He wants you to follow him, and to follow him not because of any spectacular showmanship on his part, but simply because you love him—simply! I bear my solemn witness that he lives and is near you and that we are being led by his living prophet in these last days. All of which I do in the holy name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Julio E. Dávila and Graham W. Doxey of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing that favorite hymn "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Cree-L Kofford, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Cree-L Kofford

Standing at this historic pulpit with memories of those men and women who have stood here before me filling my thoughts, I am reminded of the admonition given to Moses when he was told, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

I pray that as I stand upon this holy ground I may do so with my shoes from off my feet.

Trial to receive your inheritance

I desire to teach you concerning matters of eternal significance. In doing so I shall speak allegorically, which simply means that I will teach by using a story which has symbolic meanings.

In an allegorical sense, I am here today as a member of the trial team assembled by your chief advocate. We have now received the legal action in which each of you has been named as a party defendant. I and others of the trial team have reviewed the pleadings carefully and have confirmed that the real purpose of opposing counsel is to prove that you are *not* eligible to receive your ultimate inheritance. Our

adversary's trial team is even now working tirelessly to assemble the facts necessary to bring about your defeat.

By virtue of motions made, heard, and previously decided, we have been compelled to produce on behalf of each of you all records relating to your business and personal transactions. These include a schedule of your neighbors, friends, and business acquaintances. Additionally, full disclosure concerning your spouse, your children, your parents, and members of your extended family has been made.

You should know that our adversary is prepared to spend such time, effort, and money as is necessary to deprive you of your inheritance. They have already expended untold millions of dollars in preparing their case against each of you. They have hired gifted, talented, and experienced people to work for them. They intend to win!

Fortunately, you are represented by the *most* skilled, capable, and diligent counsel I have ever seen. It's amazing to watch him as he argues on your behalf before the Supreme Judge.

Judgment waits until life's end

For example, our adversary brought a motion seeking an order that some of you have already forfeited your rights to your ultimate inheritance and therefore a summary judgment should be entered against you. I must admit he was brilliant in his presentation. For a time it seemed to me that he would prevail. Many of the court personnel were nodding their heads in seeming agreement with him. His argument was powerful.

Citing several of you by name, he said: "If these defendants have lived this long and have not yet taken serious steps to qualify for their ultimate inheritance, why should we waste further time of the court? Let us simply enter judgment against them now and be done with it." So powerful was his presentation that many in the public gallery applauded when he concluded.

You could have heard a pin drop when your chief advocate arose. The suspense in the courtroom was electrifying. What arguments could he possibly make that would overcome those just presented? I wish you could have been there.

In contrast to the bombastic and cynical arguments of opposing counsel, your advocate began your defense as a trickle and built to the force of a mighty river. Humbly, softly, meaningfully, and compellingly, he pled your case. I knew the impact he was having when I saw tears streaming down the cheeks of many in the courtroom. I don't remember all of his arguments and logic, but I do remember him saying that man is a little lower than the angels (see Psalm 8:5) and that the worth of souls is great (see D&C 18:10). In one of the most majestic moments, his eyes filled with compassion and his voice quivering with indignation, he admonished, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7).

He went on to argue that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32) and closed with a breathtaking summary in which he said no one has the right to judge the sum total of a man's life until that life has been lived.

There was silence in the room when he finished, silence broken only by the voice of the Supreme Judge announcing his decision: "Motion of counsel for the plaintiffs is denied. The issues sought to be summarily decided here are better left until trial of this matter on the merits," he said.

Questions you will be asked

Now, in preparation for your appearance on the witness stand, you should be advised that in the law we have what are known as threshold questions. These are simply questions that are the point of beginning or the starting place. The threshold question in your trial is, "Do you love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind?" (see Matthew 22:37). If the answer is no, there will be a motion for judgment against you. That motion will be granted.

On the other hand, if you answer yes, opposing counsel will immediately test the validity of your answer with the question, "Do you keep his commandments?" (see John 14:15). A negative response will reveal your fraud, and you will stand judged by your own testimony. If your answer is in the affirmative, there will then follow hours, perhaps days of questions, each designed to prove that you do not, in fact, keep his commandments. Among those questions will be the following:

1. Do you love your neighbor as yourself? (See Matthew 22:39.)
2. Do you place worldly pursuits or personal pleasures above your service to God? (See Exodus 20:3.)

3. Do you take the name of the Lord God in vain? (See Exodus 20:7.)

4. Do you keep the Sabbath day holy? (See Exodus 20:8.)

5. Do you honor your father and mother? (See Exodus 20:12.)

6. Do you commit adultery or fornication? (See Exodus 20:14.)

7. Do you steal? (See Exodus 20:15.)

8. Do you bear false witness? (See Exodus 20:16.)

9. Do you covet? (See Exodus 20:17.)

Remember, opposing counsel and his trial team will be fully conversant with your conduct and behavior. Witnesses will have been subpoenaed by them to testify against you. Your neighbors will present their testimony concerning your conduct with them. Those who have observed your Sabbath day activity will be called to the stand. On each point where you are vulnerable, witnesses will be produced to contradict your sworn testimony.

As your counsel, we will, of course, be equally well prepared. Your chief counsel will produce every witness favorable to you and elicit from them every fact which may be used on your behalf.

Life's facts can still be created

However, one thing is clear—the ultimate outcome of your case is dependent upon the facts which you provide. There's an old adage among trial lawyers that says, "We don't make the

facts; we only present them." The facts which represent your life are the facts that will ultimately determine your victory or your defeat.

That is one of the reasons I have come today. I have been asked to see that you are clearly informed concerning this matter and to urge you, where necessary, to create facts which will allow the Supreme Judge to find on your behalf. Fortunately for you, your life's facts *can* still be created. No matter how long you have lived, no matter how many mistakes you have made, your life's story *can* still be changed. It *can* still be written. It is not too late. Please, I plead with you, help him to help you win your ultimate inheritance.

Now before closing, I should like to express my deep love to Ila, who is my sweetheart and my heartbeat. I honor her and the womanhood which she so elegantly represents. I love our five children, who are my best friends, and our twelve grandchildren, who regularly teach me the joy of unconditional love, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph C. Muren, who was also sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Joseph C. Muren

Elder Muren's conversion

My conversion to the gospel and my baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began some thirty-seven years ago. I was in my first year of university studies when Elder

Henry Eddington of Shoshone, Idaho, and Elder Eleazer Asay of Orem, Utah, began to teach me of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

I was intrigued with the discussions. I found that my intellect was

stimulated by the new vistas of knowledge presented by these two mature representatives of the Church who had been called later in life to serve missions.

Elder Eddington was leading the discussion that last evening together before I was to return to the university. He had been reviewing why there was a need for a restoration, and then he paused and bore solemn testimony of the truthfulness of their message. Then he reached over, touching my knee with the only hand that he had, and said, "And now you will know it is true." The Spirit of God came into my body as a fire. It felt as if it would consume me. It left me physically exhausted but totally assured that the Church was true. Now I knew for myself.

Receiving a testimony

It was nearly thirty years later while I was on an assignment in Idaho that I was approached by a sister who inquired, "Brother Muren, would you be available tomorrow, Saturday, to come to our home for lunch?" She continued without waiting for an answer. "I am Velma Holsinger, the daughter of Henry Eddington, one of the elders who taught you the gospel in California. I have in my possession my father's missionary journals, and I have marked those pages which deal with your conversion."

The next day I arrived promptly and anxiously read through the marked pages. I was most interested in those passages which dealt with the experience that allowed me to know of the truthfulness of the gospel.

Elder Eddington had carefully recorded in his journal that he and Elder Asay had held a special fast and had prayed that day so that "young Joe Muren might know for himself."

The Book of Mormon records well what occurred to me that evening in

1954. As those servants of the Lord "did minister with power and with great authority," it was not possible that I could disbelieve their words (see 3 Nephi 7:17-18).

As the years have passed, I have recognized more fully that it was not just a spiritual experience of the moment, but rather, I was a recipient of a testimony, a gift from Heavenly Father, that when nourished and cherished would have lasting effects upon me every day of my life.

Why the Church sends out missionaries

Now, as we look behind me at this array of missionaries, we are often asked by nonmembers why the Church continues to send out the Elder Asays and the Elder Eddingtons—the tens of thousands of missionaries every year. They inquire, "Why do you send them even to those nations which already know of the Bible and Jesus Christ?" Why did Elder Asay, in his sixties, leave his bride of many years to serve a mission in California? Why did Elder Eddington, a retired teacher and principal, not remain in Idaho and enjoy his family during those "golden years"?

Again the answer is clear in the scriptures. After the Lord had been crucified, He returned to the earth to bear witness of His resurrection and to give a sacred charge to His Apostles. From the twenty-eighth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we read: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (28:19-20).

Today, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues with this sacred charge—that is, to go and to teach all nations to observe all things

whatsoever He, the Savior, has commanded us (see Matthew 28:20). These thousands of missionaries who have been called by a prophet are visual evidence that our Heavenly Father has not forgotten His children. We bear witness to the world that He lives, that He knows each one of us individually. He has a plan, a divine plan, to bring you and to bring me back into His presence. The Savior has returned to the earth by way of modern-day prophets all of those teachings, all of those ordinances, and His holy priesthood to bring happiness in this life and eternal joy in the life to come—a plan with solutions, a divine plan with guidance to all of the challenges of this life.

Again, the question is asked: “Why do we have more than forty thousand missionaries serving in the world?” Because Heavenly Father loves us. These men and women are His servants! They are His representatives! They come with a message that truly represents what the world needs and wants.

You can know for yourself

You too can know! Yes, you too can know for yourself! For those of you that have already received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, I encourage you to cherish that testimony. It is so delicate! It is so fragile! It needs to be nourished with prayer, with the reading of the scriptures, and being at the right place at the right time. I promise you and bear witness that your testimony will grow, and you can have a mighty effect on those with whom you associate.

Now, there are friends of mine here today who are not members. I know you search for the truths which Heavenly Father has given us. You need to know that you are His children, and we invite you to allow the Elder Eddingtons and the Elder Asays of the Church today to teach you how the Church was returned to the earth in these latter days.

Heavenly Father offers to you through His servants a new life. The scriptures call it a rebirth. Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ tell His apostles to “go . . . and teach,” but to baptize them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

I bear testimony, paraphrasing the words of Peter in his second epistle, that we do not follow cunningly devised fables when we make known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 2:16).

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ did return to the earth in 1820. They did restore the priesthood of God and His plan of salvation to a modern-day prophet, Joseph Smith. I know that! I cannot deny what I have felt and what I have seen. I bear this witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard the remarks of Elder Joseph C. Muren of the Seventy. What a timely message for this missionary chorus to hear.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With you, I rejoice in the testimony and talent of these new Brethren.

Importance of repentance

For some months, I’ve tried to emphasize repentance, one of the most

vital and merciful doctrines of the kingdom. It is too little understood, too little applied by us all, as if it were merely a word on a bumper sticker. Since we have been told clearly by Jesus what manner of men and women we ought to become—even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27)—how can we do so except each of us employs repentance as the regular means of personal progression? Personal repentance is part of taking up the cross daily (see Luke 9:23). Without it, clearly there could be no “perfecting of the Saints” (Ephesians 4:12).

Besides, there is more individuality in those who are more holy.

Sin, on the other hand, brings sameness; it shrinks us to addictive appetites and insubordinate impulses. For a brief surging, selfish moment, sin may create the illusion of individuality, but only as in the grunting, galloping Gadarene swine! (see Matthew 8:28–32).

Repentance is a rescuing, not a dour doctrine. It is available to the gross sinner as well as to the already good individual striving for incremental improvement.

Repentance requires both turning away from evil and turning to God (see Deuteronomy 4:30; see also Bible Dictionary, “Repentance”). When “a mighty change” is required, full repentance involves a *180-degree turn*, and without looking back! (see Alma 5:12–13). Initially, this turning reflects progress from telestial to terrestrial behavior, and later on to celestial behavior. As the sins of the telestial world are left behind, the focus falls ever more steadily upon the sins of omission, which often keep us from full consecration.

Real repentance involves not a mechanical checklist but a checkrein- ing of the natural self. Often overlap-

ping and mutually reinforcing, each portion of the process of repentance is essential. This process rests on inner resolve but is much aided by external support.

Recognition of wrong

There can be no repentance without *recognition* of wrong. Whether by provocation, introspection, or wrenching remembrance, denial must be dissolved. As with the prodigal son who finally “came to himself” (Luke 15:17), the first rays of recognition help us begin to see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13), including distinguishing between the motes and beams. Recognition is a sacred moment, often accompanied by the hot blush of shame.

Remorse

After recognition, real *remorse* floods the soul. This is a “godly sorrow,” not merely the “sorrow of the world” nor the “sorrowing of the damned” when we can no longer “take happiness in sin” (see 2 Corinthians 7:10; Mormon 2:13). False remorse instead is like fondling our failings. In ritual regret, we mourn our mistakes but without mending them.

There can be no real repentance without personal suffering and the passage of sufficient time for the needed cleansing and turning. This is much more than merely waiting until feelings of remorse subside. Misery, like adversity, can have its special uses. No wonder chastening is often needed until the turning is really under way! (see D&C 1:27; Helaman 12:3).

Real remorse quickly brings forth positive indicators, “fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; see also Acts 26:20; Alma 5:54). In process of time, these fruits bud, blossom, and ripen.

Confession

True repentance also includes *confession*: “Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers” (Ezra 10:11). One with a broken heart will not hold back. As confession lets the sickening sin empty out, then the Spirit which withdrew returns to renew.

Support from others is especially crucial now. Hence, we are directed to be part of a caring community in which we all “lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5). Did not the citizens of the unequaled City of Enoch so improve together “in process of time”? (Moses 7:21; see also 7:68–69).

All sins are to be confessed to the Lord, some to a Church official, some to others, and some to all of these. A few may require public confession. Confessing aids forsaking. We cannot expect to sin publicly and extensively and then expect to be rescued privately and quickly, being beaten with only a few stripes (see D&C 42:88–93).

Forsaking of sinning

In real repentance, there is the actual *forsaking* of sinning. “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezekiel 18:30). A suffering Korihor confessed, “I always knew that there was a God” (Alma 30:52), but his turning was still incomplete; hence, “Alma said unto him: If this curse should be taken from thee thou wouldst again lead away the hearts of this people” (Alma 30:55).

Thus, when “a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

Genuine support and love from others—not isolation—are needed to sustain this painful forsaking and turning!

Restitution

Restitution is required too.

“Because he hath sinned, . . . he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found” (Leviticus 6:4).

Sometimes, however, restitution is not possible in real terms, such as when one contributed to another’s loss of faith or virtue. Instead, a subsequent example of righteousness provides a compensatory form of restitution.

Repentance is difficult

In this rigorous process, so much clearly depends upon meekness. Pride keeps repentance from even starting or continuing. Some fail because they are more concerned with the preservation of their public image than with having Christ’s image in their countenances! (see Alma 5:14). Pride prefers cheap repentance, paid for with shallow sorrow. Unsurprisingly, seekers after cheap repentance also search for superficial forgiveness instead of real reconciliation. Thus, real repentance goes far beyond simply saying “I’m sorry.”

In the anguishing process of repentance, we may sometimes feel God has deserted us. The reality is that our behavior has isolated us from Him. Thus, while we are turning away from evil but have not yet turned fully to God, we are especially vulnerable. Yet we must not give up but, instead, reach out to God’s awaiting arm of mercy, which is outstretched “all the day long” (Jacob 5:47; 6:4; 2 Nephi 28:32; Mormon 5:11). Unlike us, God has no restrictive office hours.

No part of walking by faith is more difficult than walking the road of repentance. However, with “faith unto repentance,” we can push roadblocks out of the way, moving forward to beg

God for mercy (see Alma 34:16). True contrition brings full capitulation. One simply surrenders, caring only about what God thinks, not what "they" think, while meekly offering, "O God, . . . make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). Giving away all our sins is the only way we can come to know God.

In contrast, those who hold back some of their sins will be held back. So will those who refuse to work humbly and honestly with the Lord's appointed. Partial disclosure to appointed leaders brings full accountability. The Prophet Joseph said, "We ought to . . . keep nothing back" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 7).

We all need repentance

Reflective of our total progression, repentance is not solely for renouncing transgression. For instance, Moses was a righteous and remarkable man. Nevertheless, he needed to change his leadership style for his welfare as well as the people's (see Exodus 18:17-19). Moses succeeded because he was the most meek man upon the face of the earth (see Numbers 12:3). Blessed are the meek, for they are neither easily offended by counsel nor aggravated by admonition. If we were more meek, brothers and sisters, repentance would be much more regular and less staled at.

Our deficiencies of style usually reflect an underdeveloped Christian attribute, as when a chronically poor listener exhibits a lack of love or meekness. You and I are too quick to forgive ourselves in matters of style.

Even when free of major transgression, we can develop self-content-

ment instead of seeking self-improvement. This was once true of Amulek, who later acknowledged, "I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God" (Alma 10:4-6).

Given the relevancy of repentance as a principle of progress for all, no wonder the Lord has said to His servants multiple times that the thing of greatest worth would be to cry repentance to this generation! (see D&C 6:9; 14:8; 15:6).

Things that impede repentance

Still other things stubbornly impede repentance, such as our not being reprov'd early on when we might have been less proud and more able to recognize our need to change (see D&C 121:43). In such situations, truly "no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Or we may be too filled with self-pity, that sludge in which sin sprouts so easily, or too invested in self-reinforcing behavior to turn away from it.

Or we can be too preoccupied with "pleasing . . . the carnal mind" (Alma 30:53), which always insistently asks, "What have you done for me lately?" We can also be too unforgiving, refusing to reclassify others. Yet "he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin" (D&C 64:9). We cannot repent for someone else. But we can forgive someone else, refusing to hold hostage those whom the Lord seeks to set free!

Ironically, some believe the Lord can forgive them, but they refuse to forgive themselves. We are further impeded at times simply because we have not really been taught why and how to repent.

Blessings that follow repentance

As we do repent, however, special assurances await:

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“All his transgressions . . . shall not be mentioned unto him” (Ezekiel 18:22).

“I, the Lord, remember [their sins] no more”! (D&C 58:42).

Along with all the foregoing reasons for our individual repentance, Church members have a special rendezvous to keep, brothers and sisters. Nephi saw it. One future day, he said, Jesus’ covenant people, “scattered upon all the face of the earth,” will be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14). This will happen, but only after more members become more saintly and more consecrated in conduct.

There are some tutoring lines in one of our favorite hymns:

Come unto Jesus, ye heavy laden,
Careworn and fainting, by sin
oppressed.

He’ll safely guide you unto that
haven

Where all who trust him may
rest. . . .

Come unto Jesus; He’ll ever heed
you,

Though in the darkness you’ve
gone astray.

His love will find you and gently
lead you
From darkest night into day.
[*Hymns*, no. 117]

Brothers and sisters, we need never mistake local cloud cover for general darkness. The Atoning Light of the world saw to that. It was for our sake that perfectly remarkable Jesus was perfectly consecrated. Jesus let His own will be totally “swallowed up in the will of the Father” (Mosiah 15:7). If you and I would come unto Jesus, we must likewise yield to God, holding nothing back. Then other soaring promises await!

The prophet Mormon declared that Jesus waits “with open arms to receive [us]” (Mormon 6:17), while the unrepentant and the unconsecrated will never know that ultimate joy described by Mormon, who knew whereof he spoke, of being “clasped in the arms of Jesus” (Mormon 5:11).

May God help each of us to so live now in order to merit that marvelous moment then is my prayer for myself—for all of us—in the holy name of the Great Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters and friends, for some time I have pondered what I might speak about today. I seem to have been led in my thinking by a concern that so many in our generation are missing great blessings by not honoring the Lord’s day.

Sundays as a young boy

I confess that as a young boy, Sunday was not my favorite day. Grandfather shut down the action. We didn’t have any transportation. We couldn’t drive the car. He wouldn’t even let us start the motor. We couldn’t ride the

horses or the steers or the sheep. It was the Sabbath, and by commandment the animals also needed rest. We walked to Church and everywhere else we wanted to go. I can honestly say that we observed both the spirit and the letter of Sabbath worship.

By today's standards, perhaps Grandfather's interpretation of Sabbath day activities seems extreme, but something wonderful has been lost in our lives. To this day, I have been pondering to try to understand fully what has slipped away. Part of it was knowing that I was well on the Lord's side of the line. Another part was the feeling that Satan's influence was further away. Mostly it was the reinforcement received by the spiritual power which was generated. We had the rich feeling that the spiritual "fulness of the earth" (D&C 59:16) was ours, as promised by the Lord in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Scriptural teachings about the Sabbath

Ever since Adam's day, the divine law of the Sabbath has been emphasized repeatedly over the centuries more than any other commandment. This long emphasis alone is an indication of its importance. In Genesis we learn that God himself set the example for us in the creation of the earth:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3).

In biblical times this commandment to rest and worship was so strict that a violation of it called for the death penalty (see Exodus 31:15).

Even the earth was given a sabbath rest: "But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard" (Leviticus 25:4).

The Sabbath was referred to in the Old Testament days as a blessed and hallowed day (see Exodus 20:11), as a symbol of a perpetual covenant of faithfulness (see Exodus 31:16), as a holy convocation (see Leviticus 23:3), as a day of spiritual celebration (see Leviticus 23:32).

Jesus reaffirmed the importance of the Sabbath day devotion, but he introduced a new spirit into this part of worship. Rather than observe the endless technicalities and prohibitions concerning what should and should not be done on the Lord's day, he affirmed that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:12). He taught us that "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8) and introduced the principle that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). He performed good deeds on the Sabbath, such as healing the man with palsy (see Mark 2:1-12) as well as the man with the paralyzed hand (see Matthew 12:10-13). So the divine mandate of Sabbath day observance in our day is now more of a manifestation of individual devotion and commitment rather than a requirement of civil law.

The great modern-day revelation on Sabbath day worship is contained in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High;

"Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times;

"But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.

"And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full" (D&C 59:9-13).

This great commandment is culminated with a promise: "Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth" (D&C 59:16). To have the benefit of all of God's creations is a very significant promise.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is much more than just physical rest. It involves spiritual renewal and worship. President Spencer W. Kimball gave excellent counsel on Sabbath day observance. He said:

"The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. To fail to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], pp. 96-97).

Over a lifetime of observation, it is clear to me that the farmer who observes the Sabbath day seems to get more done on his farm than he would if he worked seven days. The mechanic will be able to turn out more and better products in six days than in seven. The doctor, the lawyer, the dentist, the scientist will accomplish more by trying to rest on the Sabbath than if he tries to utilize every day of the week for his professional work. I would counsel all students, if they can, to arrange their schedules so that they do not study on the Sabbath. If students and other seekers after truth will do this, their minds will be quickened and the infinite Spirit will lead them to the verities they wish to learn. This is because God has hallowed his day and blessed it as a perpetual covenant of faithfulness (see Exodus 31:16).

On February 1, 1980, when the First Presidency announced the consolidated Sunday meeting schedule, the following counsel was given:

"A greater responsibility will be placed upon the individual members and families for properly observing the Sabbath day. More time will be available for personal study of the scriptures and family-centered gospel study.

"Other appropriate Sabbath activities, such as strengthening family ties, visiting the sick and homebound, giving service to others, writing personal and family histories, genealogical work, and missionary work, should be carefully planned and carried out.

"It is expected that this new schedule of meetings and activities will result in greater spiritual growth for members of the Church" ("Meeting Schedule Approved," *Church News*, 2 Feb. 1980, p. 3).

It is hoped that priesthood leaders and members of the Church will honor the spirit of more family togetherness on Sunday.

Miracles related to the Sabbath

The children of Israel were miraculously sustained in the wilderness for over forty years. They received manna from heaven daily except on the Sabbath. The manna had to be gathered and used the day it fell, or it became wormy and would stink (see Exodus 16:20, 30). But on the sixth day, prior to the Sabbath, twice as much manna fell as on the other days (see Exodus 16:5). The children of Israel were instructed by the Lord to gather twice as much so that it would last for two days because the manna did not fall on the Sabbath day. When they did this, a third miracle happened. On the Sabbath day the manna gathered the day before did not stink, and there were no worms in it, for it was preserved for Sabbath day use (see Exodus 16:24).

Over the centuries, other stories of miraculous happenings relating to Sabbath day observance have been preserved. One is the story of the cobbler working under one of the megalithic stones in Avebury, near Stonehenge, England:

"'One Sunday,' wrote John Saunders in his journal for August 13, 1712, 'a cobbler was mending of shoos under one of these great stones. The minute he rose the stone fell down and broke in pieces on the very ground where he sat which made him see the great providence of God in preserving him alive and so deter him from braking the Sabbath for which reason he never more worked on the Sabbath day'" (Michael Pitts, *Footprints through Avebury* [Dorchester, England: The Friary Press Limited, 1985], pp. 31-32).

A more recent miracle occurred at the Wells Stake Welfare Tannery some years ago where hides of animals were tanned into leather. On regular work days, the hides were removed from the vats and fresh lime placed in the vats, after which the hides were returned to

the lime solution. If the hides were not turned on holidays, they would spoil. But the change was never made on Sunday, and there were no spoiled hides on Monday. Explained J. Lowell Fox, the supervisor of the tannery at the time:

"This brought a strange fact to our minds: holidays are determined by man, and on these days just as on every week day, the hides need to have special care every twelve hours. Sunday is the day set aside by the Lord as a day of rest, and He makes it possible for us to rest from our labors as He has commanded. The hides at the tannery never spoil on Sundays. This is a modern-day miracle, a miracle that happens every weekend!" (*Handbook for Guide Patrol Leaders* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964], p. 37).

Why should we honor the Sabbath?

Why has God asked us to honor the Sabbath day? The reasons I think are at least threefold. The first has to do with the physical need for rest and renewing. Obviously God, who created us, would know more than we do of the limits of our physical and nervous energy and strength.

The second reason is, in my opinion, of far greater significance. It has to do with the need for regeneration and the strengthening of our spiritual being. God knows that left completely to our own devices without regular reminders of our spiritual needs, many would degenerate into the preoccupation of satisfying earthly desires and appetites. This need for physical, mental, and spiritual regeneration is met in large measure by faithful observance of the Sabbath day.

The third reason may be the most important of the three. It has to do with obedience to commandments as

an expression of our love for God. Blessed are those who need no reasons other than their love for the Savior to keep his commandments. The response of Adam to the angel who asked Adam why he made a sacrifice unto the Lord is a model for all. Responded Adam, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me" (Moses 5:6).

The prophet Samuel reminds us, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

In this day of increasing access to and preoccupation with materialism, there is a sure protection for ourselves and our children against the plagues of our day. The key to that sure protection surprisingly can be found in Sabbath observance: "And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9).

Who can question but that sincere Sabbath observance will help keep ourselves unspotted from the world? The injunction to keep the Sabbath day holy is a continuing covenant between God and his elect. The Lord told Moses and the children of Israel: "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations . . . for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exodus 31:13, 16-17).

Choosing Sabbath activities

The Mosaic injunctions of Sabbath day observance contained many detailed do's and don'ts. This may have been necessary to teach obedience to those who had been in captivity and had long been denied individual freedom of choice. Thereafter, these Mosaic instructions were carried to many unwarranted extremes which the Savior condemned. In that day the technicalities of Sabbath day observance

outweighed the "weightier matters of the law" (Matthew 23:23) such as faith, charity, and the gifts of the Spirit.

In our time God has recognized our intelligence by not requiring endless restrictions. Perhaps this was done with a hope that we would catch more of the spirit of Sabbath worship rather than the letter thereof. In our day, however, this pendulum of Sabbath day desecration has swung very far indeed. We stand in jeopardy of losing great blessings promised. After all, it is a test by which the Lord seeks to "prove you in all things" (D&C 98:14) to see if your devotion is complete.

Where is the line as to what is acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath? Within the guidelines, each of us must answer this question for ourselves. While these guidelines are contained in the scriptures and in the words of the modern prophets, they must also be written in our hearts and governed by our consciences. Brigham Young said of the faithful, "The spirit of their religion leaks out of their hearts" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:83). It is quite unlikely that there will be any serious violation of Sabbath worship if we come humbly before the Lord and offer him all our heart, our soul, and our mind (see Matthew 22:37).

What is worthy or unworthy on the Sabbath day will have to be judged by each of us by trying to be honest with the Lord. On the Sabbath day we should do what we have to do and what we ought to do in an attitude of worshipfulness and then limit our other activities. I wish to testify unequivocally concerning the blessings of Sabbath day worship in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the Missionary Training Center mixed choir for the inspiring music we have heard

this afternoon and to each speaker who has lifted our hearts toward heaven.

The choir will now sing in closing "A Marvelous Work." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Merlin R. Lybbert of the Seventy.

The choir sang "A Marvelous Work."

Elder Merlin R. Lybbert offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 5, 1991. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted.

The music for this session was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood meeting. We are part of a huge congregation gathered in various halls across the continent and in some other lands. President Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all of us.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square, the BYU Marriott Center, and

locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that Elders L. Tom Perry, Harold G. Hillam, and Gerald E. Melchin are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Spencer J. Condie and LeGrand R. Curtis are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those brethren in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon four of our faithful brethren who served for 5½ years were released—Elders H. Verlan Andersen, George I. Cannon, Francis M. Gibbons, and Gardner H. Russell. We extend to them our gratitude for the devoted and selfless service which they have given.

Elders LeGrand R. Curtis and Robert K. Dellenbach were released as Counselors in the Young Men General Presidency, and Elders Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld were sustained as First and Second Counselors respectively. Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Rulon G. Craven were released as Counselors in the Sunday School General Presidency, and Elders Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler were sustained as First and Second Counselors respectively.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks," following which Elder W. Eugene Hansen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks."

Elder W. Eugene Hansen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "I Feel My Savior's Love." Following the choir number, Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us.

The choir sang "I Feel My Savior's Love."

Elder David B. Haight

I thank the Lord for this wonderful opportunity to be with you here tonight, you who hold the priesthood. I pray that my words will be appropriate, clearly heard, and understood.

Talk directed to the Aaronic Priesthood

Some of you here tonight have just turned twelve years of age and are brand-new deacons. Many of you are thirteen or fourteen or sixteen or older. But I want to speak especially to you of the Aaronic Priesthood, and others of you may listen if you desire.

Some of you have just had a birthday. I just had a birthday—my eighty-fifth. You enjoyed your birthday party, and I had a wonderful time at mine. You had your *young* friends around you, and I had my *old* friends around me. There is, however, a vital difference between us—I have had seventy-plus years of experience and learning beyond yours. I have been abundantly blessed with a most challenging, exciting, and wonderfully productive life—a lifetime of witnessing a world in action.

There have been many disappointments and heartaches but *always* opportunities, new horizons, and blessings beyond measure. I've also learned some important lessons and truths—one, the Scout motto "Be prepared" is for real.

Football game in 1923

I grew up in a small country town in Idaho. Football came to our school later than most. It was 1923. We had neither equipment nor a coach. But the great day arrived when our high school principal was able to buy twelve inexpensive football outfits—but not football shoes with cleats. We used our basketball shoes. Our chemistry teacher was recruited to be our coach because he had once witnessed a *real* game.

He taught us a few simple plays and how to tackle, and then we were ready to play—or so we thought. We set off for our first game with Twin Falls, the previous year's Idaho state champions.

We dressed and went out on the field to warm up. Their school band started to play (they had more students in the band than we had in our entire high school), and then through the gates came their team. They kept coming and coming—all thirty-nine of them, fully equipped and shoes with cleats. The twelve of us, a full team of eleven plus one all-round substitute, watched in amazement.

The game was most interesting! To say it was a learning experience is rather mild. After just two plays, we had no desire to have the ball, so we kicked it and they scored. Whenever they got the ball, they would run a baffling play and score. Our goal was to get rid of the ball—it was less punishing.

In the final minutes of the game, they became a little reckless and a wild pass fell into the arms of Clifford Lee, who was playing halfback with me. He was startled, not knowing for sure what to do—that is, until he saw them thundering after him. Then he knew what to do and boy, was he fast! But he wasn't running for points; he was running for his life! Clifford made a touchdown. Six points went up on the scoreboard. The final score—106 to 6! We really didn't deserve the six points, but with our bloody shirts and socks and cuts and bruises, we took them anyway.

A learning experience? Of course! An individual or a team must be prepared. Success or achievement depends upon preparation.

Years of preparation

The Aaronic Priesthood years are critical years of preparation. The Lord knew young men would need these valuable teen years to prepare for life—precious years with meaningful, never-to-be-forgotten spiritual experiences. You will face some crucial deci-

sions, but hopefully you will take advantage of the seasoned experience and counsel of your loving parents and concerned priesthood leaders.

Committed young people

In 2 Timothy in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul is jailed in a dark, dreary dungeon awaiting execution for his belief in Jesus Christ and teaching His gospel. Pouring out his troubled soul and firm conviction, he pleads in a letter written to his dear young friend Timothy to be faithful to the truths that have been taught to him and to remember “the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Paul had personally blessed and ordained Timothy and now urged him to be strong and not ashamed of his testimony of our Lord, come what may.

The Apostle Paul was fearless and never wavered in his testimony of Jesus. His faith and determination lifted him from being a tentmaker to become a teacher, a missionary, leader, and organizer of Christian branches. He most certainly wasn't a sissy nor weak. People of great faith know what is right and do it. They have uncompromised determination and commitment and are capable of enduring pressure or hardship. Paul knew what was right, and you know what is right. When you take courage like Paul and do what you know is right, nothing will stop your progress but yourself.

“Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. It is . . . words that speak boldly of your intentions; and . . . actions which speak louder than . . . words. It is . . . coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. It is what character is made of.”

Oh, how this world needs committed, determined, and courageous young

people—young men with a righteous conviction—who will help bind up its wounds and teach faith, hope, and truth! Where will these young people come from? They will come from the ranks of the young men and women of this Church—that's where.

The Lord asked, "Unto what were ye ordained?" and then answered, "To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even . . . to teach the truth" (D&C 50:13–14).

President Spencer W. Kimball stated that "you are the sons of God. You are the elect of God, and you have within your [grasp] the possibility to become a god and pass by the angels . . . to your exaltation"—possibilities which seem beyond ordinary imagination, yet the promises are divine (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 496).

Personal foundation stones

As the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple was being laid, with footings sixteen feet wide, President Brigham Young discovered the workmen were using a soft stone. The work was halted, the soft stone taken out and replaced with giant blocks of granite. He declared, "We are building this temple to stand through the millennium" (quoted in LeGrand Richards, Conference Report, Oct. 1971, p. 83; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 81).

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing," the Lord admonishes, "for ye are laying the foundation of a great work" (D&C 64:33).

You Aaronic Priesthood holders are setting your personal foundation stones in place—stones of granite, character stones that hopefully will last forever. Your foundation stones should include principles taught by the Savior of faith, prayer, obedience, honesty, truth, and accountability for your ac-

tions. And, of course, a keystone of your foundation will be the priesthood—the power and authority of God delegated to you to act in matters pertaining to salvation, with its accompanying obligations and blessings.

You are a member of a quorum of the priesthood with officers of your peers—with duties, powers, and responsibilities. You are learning how Church members reach out to rescue and assist those who drift away or have a sorrow or a hurt. You are beginning to develop a sensitivity for Christlike service to others that brings joy to one's soul.

God our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ determined—just imagine!—that Joseph Smith was old enough at fourteen to begin his instruction that would bring about the mighty work of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Joseph saw the living God! He saw the living Christ! He was trusted with a heavenly task, and he completed it. You, too, are old enough to be trusted with ever-increasing tasks.

Choose to do right

You young Aaronic Priesthood men are old enough to know right from wrong, to know about Satan and his evil influence. *Satan* is a Hebrew name for the devil. It means adversary—one who wages open war with the truth and those who obey truthful principles. Satan chose the evil course from the beginning. His greatest aim, as taught by Moses and Enoch, is to get men to worship him (see Moses 1:12; 6:49). He has had great success. As the professed god of this world, Satan has the adoration and worship of those who live after the manner of the world. All forms of wickedness and evil and rebellion against God's holy purposes are of the devil. However, we are tested and challenged and must work out our salvation

in the presence of evil. Nephi taught, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). We have our agency to choose right from wrong, good from evil. But just because evil exists does *not* mean that we must partake of it. You cannot do wrong and *feel* right.

Members of our Church know that tobacco and beer and alcohol, in all of their forms, have been condemned by the medical and scientific world as well as by God for the use of man. Civil laws of control are generally weak and difficult to enforce. With our inspired understanding, our most effective control over these poisonous products comes from ourselves.

Even though San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young was the only Mormon in his high school in Connecticut, he reported that there was no drinking with his group of friends, despite intense pressure from classmates (see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 Sept. 1991, p. D3).

You are old enough to know the serious consequences and chain of events that leads from the drinking of beer to hard liquor—leading to the loss of mental control and often to automobile accidents, loss of respect, and sexual immorality.

Some young women have stated to the news media that they are pressured by young men into sexual involvement, even threatened with unpopularity if they don't cooperate. They surely couldn't be referring to you, could they?

You young men are the protectors of your sisters and of the girls with whom you associate. Your duty to them and to yourself is to be morally clean and sexually pure before the Lord. Movies and television scenes often imply moral cleanliness is old-fashioned and not in tune with this modern world, but commandments cut into the stone tablets by the finger of God have

not changed. The Lord declared, "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery," and later added, "nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). The commandments are clear and understandable and uncompromising.

Lucifer is smart and cunning and understands weaknesses, so he can destroy. Emotions and passions are God-given but controllable.

Good people believe in you

My father died when I was only nine. As I was growing up, I would often think, "What would my father think of me?" or "How could I ever disappoint my mother?" She taught me and believed in me. I was no longer a little child but an emerging man, so I needed to act accordingly.

And so it is with you. Good people believe in you. We believe in you, your parents and brothers and sisters believe in you, and God expects the best from you. You must believe in yourself.

Don't give in when the going is rough, for you are laying the foundation of a great work, and that great work is your life, the fulfillment of your dreams. Never underestimate what you can become or how your talents may eventually be used.

Don't let others set your standards

I don't ever remember a time in my young life when I had to go through the trial of breaking in a brand-new pair of shoes. They were already broken in by the time I got them as hand-me-downs.

We hear that some young men not only request a pair of new shoes for school, but another for sports, and another for church. But not just any athletic shoe will do. They must have a special designer label or be a special advertised brand. Your jeans have to be 501s or Guess or Calvin Klein. Have

you fallen into a trap of peer pressure that requires a certain look for you to be included in the “in” crowd, whether or not your parents can afford such demands?

Do others set *your* standards—what you will wear and what you will do and not do? Believing young men and women with standards and values make these decisions for themselves and let others follow. Why aren’t we, as Latter-day Saints with our high ideals, the examples, the peer leaders setting the standards and criteria that others follow?

The brand of clothes and the shoes you wear and the gadgetry, probably not affordable by your parents, have absolutely no bearing on what you will eventually become. Our actions, our personal behavior, and our attitude determine our character and future.

The world needs someone to look up to—like you. A national leader remarked, “There comes a time when we must take a stand—when we draw a line in the dust and say, ‘Beyond this line, we do not go.’”

Govern yourselves by correct principles

Your preparation should include your personal conversion to the gospel truths of this work—knowing who the Savior is and who you are and why He loved you enough to make the atoning sacrifice for you.

Sounds difficult? I promise you that you can know, but only if you desire, with humble prayer and careful study of the scriptures. The Lord taught, “Search the scriptures . . . which testify of me,” and “ponder upon the things which I have said” (John 5:39; 3 Nephi 17:3).

Your continuing preparation is to be worthy to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, keeping yourself clean and

honorable and praying for strength and courage to withstand the evil temptations that surely come to every young man. If a mistake is made, discuss it with your bishop immediately. Do not let mistakes get an upper hold on you. Change bad behavior to good—and *do it now*. This is called repentance.

I hope you have already made a commitment to yourself and to your Heavenly Father that you will serve a full-time mission. The Lord needs your service, and you need the unmeasured blessings.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in answer to a query about this remarkable organization, said, “I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves” (quoted by John Taylor, in *Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1851, p. 339). I promise you, young priesthood holders, that if you will follow that counsel to govern yourselves by correct principles—principles you learn at home, through the scriptures, modern-day prophets, and the Holy Ghost—your decisions will be made with confidence and ease. And though fierce winds may be whipping the trees, your roots will be deeply entrenched in the ground.

I am a living witness of our Eternal Heavenly Father’s love and mercy. He lives as does His Son, our Savior. This is His holy work, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder David B. Haight, aspiring winner of the Heisman trophy, but who has given us a great talk as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, who was sustained at April conference as a member of the Seventy.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

Does Christ come first in our lives?

Good evening, brethren. It's a pleasure to be with you tonight. A few weeks ago in a testimony meeting with General Authorities, President Gordon B. Hinckley made this observation: "It is easy to be a Mormon and accept the theology. It is difficult to be a Christian and follow Christ in word and deed."

President Hinckley's challenging words came with renewed force to my mind later when I was reading a book by Michael H. Hart entitled *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. To my surprise and disappointment, Mr. Hart ranks Jesus Christ third on his list of people who have had the greatest effect on the course of human history. The author's reason for placing Jesus third in importance is as follows:

"The impact of Jesus on human history is so obvious and so enormous that few people would question his placement near the top of the list. Indeed, the more likely question is why Jesus . . . has not been placed first."

The author acknowledges that the teachings of Jesus Christ are "surely among the most remarkable and original ethical ideas ever presented. If they were widely followed, I would have had no hesitation in placing Jesus first in this book" ([New York City: Hart Publishing Co., 1978], pp. 47, 50).

What a searing and likely very true observation: If Jesus' teachings were widely followed, Mr. Hart would have no hesitation in placing Jesus first!

With these thoughts in mind, I feel it is appropriate for us to ask, "Where do we rank Jesus Christ in our lives?" Does He come first, as He should? Perhaps a more significant question would be, "Where would we rank ourselves as followers of Jesus' teachings?" Do we live as Christians in word and deed?

This is especially important for us because as bearers of the priesthood we have had bestowed upon us authority and power to officially act in the name of Jesus Christ. We have the sacred obligation and privilege to bear His name with dignity. Of all men on the earth, we are to keep His influence foremost in our lives, to bring a consistency in what we preach and in our conduct. As we do so, we will become converted and strengthen each other, and His teachings and all that His life represents will have their rightful influence and honor among mankind.

Followers of Christ help a family

One morning several years ago I was driving with my family to Disney World in Florida. Our four young daughters were excited as we approached the turnoff to that famous park. The laughter and happy chatter stopped suddenly, however, as our rented station wagon sputtered and chugged to an unexpected stop on the exit ramp. Many cars sped by us in the rush-hour traffic as I tried unsuccessfully to get the car running again. Finally, realizing there was nothing more we could do, we got out of the stalled car and huddled together off the road for a word of prayer.

As we looked up from our prayer, we saw a smiling, handsome man and his son maneuver their bright red sports car through the lanes of traffic and pull off the road beside us. For the remainder of the morning and into the afternoon, these men assisted us and cared for our needs in many kind and helpful ways. They took us and our belongings to the receiving area at the park. In their small car, it took several trips. They helped me locate a tow truck for the stranded car; they drove me to the rental agency to get a replacement vehicle. Then, because there

was some delay, they drove back to where my family waited to let them know where I was. They bought refreshments for them and then waited with my family until I returned several hours later.

We felt that these men were truly an answer to our prayer, and we told them so as we said good-bye and tried to thank them. The father responded, "Every morning I tell the good Lord that if there is anyone in need of my help today, please guide me to them."

We ranked those men very high as followers of Christ that day. Their influence remains with us still. There have been many days since then and possibly equally as many other people uplifted and influenced by daily acts of Christian kindness of that father and his son.

Everyday acts of Christian service

Acts of Christian service should be part of our everyday agenda. In the book of Acts, chapter 10, verse 38, it is said of Jesus that He "went about doing good." Jesus taught us how to do good: love our neighbors; forgive others; care for the poor, the needy, the afflicted, the lonely. It is inspiring to see that the Lord has organized His Church to also do these same things—to care for the needs of others through various assignments.

These planned acts of service generated through Church programs are important and commendable. They are the mark of a Christian people. The Church has a function in service and renders assistance that cannot be provided by individuals alone. These opportunities of the Church as an institution, however, cannot fulfill the responsibility you and I have for personal acts of Christlike kindness. These lift our soul and renew our relationship with our Heavenly Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

President Spencer W. Kimball said, "The major strides which must be made by the Church will follow upon the major strides to be made by . . . individuals" (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1979, p. 114; or *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 82).

Perhaps the greatest of Christian acts are those we never hear about. They are deeds done quietly, spontaneously, anonymously, without expectation of recognition or compensation. Christian acts begin with Christlike thoughts in our hearts. Then Christ's teachings and His characteristics will be reflected naturally in our actions. Soon there will be more friendly smiles, more kindly words, more courteous responses from us—all seemingly small, insignificant acts, yet they can have a great impact in all our lives. President Rex Lee of BYU has said, "Christlike niceness is . . . the cornerstone of [Christ's] teachings" (address given at a Brigham Young University devotional, 10 Sept. 1991).

A junior-high-age youth hurried home from school one day with steps lighter and quicker than usual, rushed into the house, and called, "Guess what? Someone said hi to me today!"

If a smile or a hello or simple kindness can bring happiness and joy into someone's life, how great is our potential to brighten this world with the influence of "Christlike niceness."

I know a young priest, Jason, who faithfully and quietly attends to his aging grandmother's needs. He stops by her home regularly to care for her yard, wash windows, or run errands. Sometimes he'll prepare something for her to eat if he sees she hasn't been eating enough that day. One Saturday when she wasn't feeling well, he took his friend to play Monopoly at her home so she wouldn't be alone.

Young men and brethren, honoring womanhood is also part of following Christ. His show of understanding toward Mary and Martha, his respect and concern for his mother and the honor bestowed on her demonstrate that Christian men are to be considerate, honest, courteous, caring toward women. The designation "a Christian gentleman" should be a desired title of every man—young or old—who bears the priesthood.

Following Christ requires sacrifice

Niceness and kindness represent one level of Christlike service, but there are other levels. Sometimes we are asked to give more than we feel we are capable of giving or more than we really want to give. We may feel burdened with expectations and responsibilities. It is then we learn that following Christ also requires sacrifice, commitment, and courage.

The father of a young family who was asked to serve as a mission president gathered his children around him. He explained to them that the prophet had emphasized that the call was a call to the entire family. He asked each of the children if they would be willing to leave their new home, their friends, their school and go three years to an unknown place in the mission field. In that tender moment, each child agreed to willingly support this call to serve.

Several days later, the father, sensing that his fourteen-year-old son was unusually solemn and quiet, sat down with him to ask what was on his mind. The boy confided that he was worried about having to quit school at such a young age to serve as a full-time missionary. He didn't know if he was ready to wear a suit and tie every day. He said, "I kinda wanted to be a boy a little longer." Of course, the son had misunderstood. These duties were not expected of a young man his age. Yet

he had been willing to do them if that was what the Lord required.

What would Jesus have me do?

Knowing what the Lord requires of us and also having the desire to follow Him doesn't always assure that it will be easy. I believe it would help to ask the questions my best friend always asks when faced with a difficult decision or challenge: "What would the Lord have me do? Would I do it for the Lord?"

A young woman I know felt saddened and frustrated because a friend had made unkind, untrue remarks about her. It distressed her that those who heard the false accusations would believe them. She wanted others to know the truth, and she wanted her friend to realize how much hurt her words had caused. The young woman thought of ways to confront her friend in an effort to have the truth known. The situation weighed heavily upon her until finally she thought, "What would Jesus do?" She decided that Jesus would show love toward her friend. And that is just what this young woman did.

Once she let the teachings of Jesus influence her decision and guide her actions, that which bothered her seemed not to matter. She didn't have to worry about it anymore. She said that she felt a big burden was lifted from her. What had been hard to endure became easier to resolve when a Christian attitude of forgiveness was taken.

When we place Jesus first in our lives, He will guide our decisions and give us the strength to avoid temptations. One day I received a phone call from my grandson Joel, who will soon be a deacon. He was having a difficult time making a decision. He had been invited to go with a group of students from his school to Sea Camp in San

Diego, California. It sounded very exciting to a young boy! There would be behind-the-scene experiences at Sea World—watching the trainers and helping to feed the sea animals. His dilemma was that the camp would be on a weekend, with scuba diving and beach exploring on Sunday.

His parents had discouraged him in going but had allowed him to make his own choice, believing he would choose what was right. He had assured them that although he couldn't attend church on Sunday, he would not swim. He said, "I can sit on the beach and be surrounded by God's creations. Heavenly Father couldn't feel bad about that, could He?"

Joel wanted to know what Grandpa Rex thought he should do. I answered with the question, "Joel, what do you think Jesus would want you to do?" His voice was a little choked up as he answered, "Grandpa, I don't think He would be very happy with me if I do that on Sunday. Do you?"

It hadn't been an easy decision to make, but it was the right one. We all have many difficult choices to make each day. There are many enticements that, if followed, will lead us away from Christ. The movies and videos we choose to watch, the entertainment we seek, the music we listen to, the styles we wear, and the language we speak are all influenced by the strength of our desire to follow Christ. In making these decisions, we may feel it is too hard to be left out or to miss out on what the world thinks is okay. Yes, "it is difficult to be a Christian and follow Christ in word and deed." When we do follow Him, however, we will feel the peace and assurance that come from making right choices. He will provide the courage necessary for those times when we have to stand alone.

Moroni was a true Christian

In the Book of Mormon Alma records the powerful account of Moroni, chief commander of all the armies of the Nephites. It is the account of one who stood alone and of the force for good he became. With his armor girded about him, his headplate, breastplate, and his shields fastened upon him, his banner of liberty raised on a pole above him, he "bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land—

"For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church."

Alma continues: "And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

"And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of Christians . . . might be favored" (Alma 46:13–16).

I pray that we, who have taken upon us His name and His marvelous priesthood authority and power, may also gladly take upon us the commitment to rank Jesus Christ first in our thoughts and also in our deeds, that we will find "the Spirit of the Lord . . . has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). This will enable us to rank ourselves as true followers of Jesus—as true Christians. Such actions will provide us and those we serve with spiritual strength to endure. That we may do this, and find the happiness and peace that lightens burdens and makes following Him easier, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

My dear brethren, what a wonderful feeling it is to be in the presence of worthy priesthood holders tonight! Among us are many young men. Though some of you are still waiting for your nineteenth birthday, others have already received your call to serve a full-time mission. It is to you that I would like to direct a few of my thoughts this evening.

Receiving a mission call

On May 15 of this year, an event occurred in our home that is repeated literally hundreds of times per week in Latter-day Saint homes throughout the Church. After a period of anxious anticipation, a letter from the prophet containing a mission call for our son Bradley arrived. This was the third such letter that we have received in our family, but each time really is the first time. The letter arrived on a day when mission business had me away from home, so the unopened letter sat on Brad's desk in the mission home in Vienna, Austria, until late that night. Finally the moment arrived, and we were all gathered together—Mom, Dad, younger brother Stephen, and, of course, Bradley.

As in many families, there is also a sort of tradition in our family that accompanies the opening of a mission call. Each of us handled the envelope, turning it in our hands and holding it up to the light as if we could somehow discern its contents. Each of us took a piece of paper and recorded our own predictions for Bradley's call: Japan, New Zealand, and France. Then there was the inevitable fumbling at opening the envelope, extending the excitement for all of us. The letter was at last in Brad's hands: "Dear Elder Neuenschwander, you are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You

are assigned to labor in the Poland Warsaw Mission."

Tears flow easily at such moments, perhaps for different reasons. Mom's eyes are moist at the thought of another son leaving the nest and facing the world. Dad recalls so vividly a day long ago when he received his call to serve in Finland. Stephen understands that this last departure of older brothers means that he will finally be the oldest at home, but his tears also mean a quiet commitment that his letter will not be far behind.

There were phone calls to returned missionary brothers at home in America, each happy but playfully disappointed that Brad's call was not to New Mexico or Munich, where they had served. Grandparents were thrilled that yet another grandson was worthy to serve the Lord.

Busy days of preparation began. July 10 came all too soon, and it was time for Brad to leave. Bidding farewell to a missionary son, as many of you know, at the MTC definitely does not get easier with practice.

In our quiet moments, Brad and I spoke of his mission. For four years he had watched missionaries come and go through the mission home. Some had even gone to Poland. Yet there are things I would share with him and with you as this great missionary experience now becomes his.

You make your mission successful

Your mission will be exactly what you decide to make it. Your excellent mission president, President Whipple, and good missionary companions will help you along the way, but keep in mind that you are the central and decisive factor in the success of your own mission. Your young but strong shoulders bear the responsibility of the call

you willingly and happily accepted. You have seen missionaries in a variety of countries and circumstances. You have also observed that in rather similar situations one missionary is successful, another a little less so. The difference lay in the attitude and desire of the individual missionary. Make the inevitable challenges of missionary work stepping-stones for your own spiritual growth. Determine now that nothing will keep you from magnifying with honor your missionary call.

Simplify your life

As most missionaries, Brad, you come from school years, rich in their variety of choice and activity. But your success as a missionary will depend, in part, on your ability to simplify your life and focus on the purpose of your call. You now move from a life centered on your own needs to one concerned with the welfare of others. Some missionaries struggle, not wanting to let go of the past and consequently never fully committing themselves to the labor at hand. There is no way a successful missionary can have one foot in the world and one in his missionary labors. Successful missionaries make that transition. They leave behind everything that may distract them from their primary purpose. Resist bringing extra luggage with you into the mission field, both in your suitcase and in your mind.

Be teachable

Whatever calling you hold in the Church, someone will always preside over you. That person will teach and encourage you in your responsibilities. Brad, be wise enough and humble enough to learn from them. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught us new mission presi-

dents in 1987 that if we would learn to be silent, the Brethren could teach us a lot. I considered it good advice, and I have learned since that in the mission field as well as in all Church callings a person who can be taught is also one who can be trusted.

Be obedient

Mission rules are important in the same way commandments are important. We all need to keep them, understanding that they give us strength, direction, and limits. The smart missionary will learn the intent of the rules and make them work for him. Your mission is a time of discipline and single-minded focus. You will be required to go without some things common to your current life-style: music, TV, videos, novels, even girls. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, Brad, but then again, there is nothing wrong with food either, unless you are fasting, in which case even a teaspoon of water is improper.

Stay with the scriptures

Missionaries sometimes feel they need doctrinal reference books to enhance their understanding of the gospel. Believe me, Brad, they are not necessary for your gospel study in the mission field. Make the scriptures the basic doctrinal textbook of your mission. The Lord has told his elders:

"Teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

"And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken" (D&C 43:15-16).

You will find the Lord to be a man of his word. The promise he extends to you as a missionary is true.

Respect the title you hold

There are few men in the Church who are referred to as Elder, but one is you—a full-time missionary. Respect that title, Brad; refer to it with reverence. Many men have brought honor to it, including your brothers. You do the same.

Keep a proper perspective

The real success of a mission is not measured on a chart—it is etched in your heart and in the hearts of those whose lives are eternally changed because of you. Share your testimony often. I have seen nothing in a missionary that exerts more power and positive influence than the bearing of pure and simple testimony. Your testimony is the first step in the conversion of those whom you teach. Have courage to invite others to change their lives and come to Christ through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

The Lord taught the Nephites: “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may

stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:20–21).

Bless the lives of others with your priesthood and your presence.

Brad, love every minute of your service to those wonderful Polish people. Love their country, their food, customs, language, and heritage. They will enrich your life and understanding.

The work in which you are engaged is true. You are teaching the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the promise of salvation to all who will listen and accept your message. Of this I bear my witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Dennis B. Neuen-schwander of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing “How Firm a Foundation,” following which we shall hear from Elder Jorge A. Rojas, who was also sustained as one of the Seventy at the April conference.

The choir and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Jorge A. Rojas

I see there are many fathers and sons together. May I ask you to join me in something we all do at home very often? Thank you.

Preparing for a bishop's interview

Hello, my son. How are you? How was your day at school? Good. Any calls? The bishop? An interview with you? Well, that's OK. Bishops have interviews all the time with young boys—just like the ones we have. We talk, we

listen, we learn from each other, we have a great time. No. It's the same thing. Don't worry. It's going to be all right.

Let's see, you'll be twelve next month, and he wants to have an interview with you. I wouldn't miss this for anything. Yes, he'll ask you questions about school and friends, the Word of Wisdom. Do you make your bed every morning? Do you take a shower every day? No, I'm not kidding you. He'll talk about those things. I'm serious. He'll

ask: "Are you praying to your Heavenly Father every day? Are you reading the scriptures? Do you love the Lord?" Do you? Do you, my son? That's good.

Covenants and ordinances

He'll talk about covenants and ordinances. No, no—*cov-e-nants*, covenants and ordinances. That's a good question. I knew you'd ask me that. Oh, they are like, you know, covenants and ordinances. Come over here.

You just told me you love Heavenly Father. I do too, my son. Now, Father in Heaven loves us. He knows you and your brothers and sisters. He knows all of us by name. And He loves us so much that He is waiting for us. He wants us to go back to Him.

In order to go back, we need to love and have faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord said a very important thing to all of us: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Now, that's a very, very important thing to know. *No one goes back without His help.* Very important.

But then He said something else: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). So we love Him by keeping His commandments. And He loves us by helping us go back. Now that's an agreement between Him and us. It's a very sacred agreement. Sacred agreements between Him and us are called covenants.

Remember your baptism? You first agreed to have faith in Him, repent of your sins, and live a good, righteous life. And He agreed to help you go back. That was the agreement; that was a covenant you both made.

But then you had to make the agreement official—just like you do when you write down an agreement on paper. But to make it official, to make it stand, you both sign your name on

that written agreement. When you want to make an agreement with the Lord official, you don't sign a document—you perform an ordinance. Ordinances are also very sacred.

Living up to the agreement

After the covenant, or agreement, is made and after the ordinance is performed, there is yet a third, vital element. You must live up to the agreement. This third element is also very sacred because the other two now depend entirely on your performance. What good will a covenant do (I agree to do something) or an ordinance (I hereby sign the agreement) if you ultimately *don't comply with it*? Understand?

The first covenant and ordinance the Lord requires is baptism. Baptism puts us on the starting line—the starting line of that road that will take us back to His presence. As we walk along this road, there are other covenants we must accept and other ordinances we must receive. But remember the third important element for each one of them: *We must live up to each new covenant we make.*

The priesthood covenant and ordinance

I think the bishop wants to talk to you about another covenant and ordinance you now need to make with the Lord. It is called priesthood. Son, the priesthood will bless your life. The bishop will make sure you understand so you'll be able to make the priesthood covenant with the Lord. Once you make the covenant, you will need to receive the ordinance. I will then be so happy, my son, to perform the ordinance and ordain you a deacon.

This will help you stay on that road that will take you back to His presence. It will be necessary for you to

keep growing and moving forward on that road. Two years later, you will need additional help. If you remain worthy, you take another step; you'll then be ready to become a teacher in the priesthood. That will require that you make another covenant, and then I will again perform the ordinance and ordain you a teacher. Two years later, if everything is well, again another step, and I will ordain you a priest.

Soon after that, you will be ready to now receive the higher priesthood, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and be ordained an elder. My son, when you receive the higher priesthood, you will have all the priesthood there is. You will then be ready to do what you've always wanted to do: be a missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ.

By then you will better understand and be grateful to the Lord for all those steps you have taken, the preparation you've received, and for the help He has given you all along the way to finally be able to come to the house of the Lord, the temple. There, my son, you will be able to accept the highest covenants and receive the most sacred ordinances. There, too, you will be reminded of the third element. Remember? After you accept covenants and receive ordinances, *you must live up to the covenants you made*. That is how we love our Lord: by keeping His commandments.

Are you ready for that interview with the bishop? Good.

A review

We now need to review the things we talked about today and express our gratitude to Heavenly Father. Do you want to review it or offer a prayer?

All right. You review it, and I'll pray.

Yes. We must love the Lord. *If we love Him, we keep His commandments*. Very good. His commandments are that we first, accept covenants; second, receive ordinances; and third, live up to the things we promised Him. That was excellent. Son, I love you.

Let's fold our arms, bow our heads, close our eyes, and pray.

Our dear Father in Heaven, we thank thee for thy many blessings—for the restoration of the gospel, which makes possible that we have the Book of Mormon, thy holy priesthood, and living prophets to guide us. We are grateful for the atonement of Jesus Christ, for immortality and the possibility of eternal life. Help us to make it a real probability as we come unto Christ through sacred covenants and ordinances. Please forgive our sins. And help us always recognize thy hand all around us and always, always keep thy commandments, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jorge A. Rojas of the Seventy has spoken to us.

It will now be our pleasure to listen to President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

One cannot gaze into the faces of this vast congregation of men assembled in the historic Tabernacle and envision the unseen audiences meeting

in other locations throughout the world without feeling your strength, recognizing your faith, and knowing of your spiritual power, even the power of the priesthood.

Called to serve

All of us are familiar with the beautiful account found in Matthew:

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:18–20).

Brethren, we too have been called to follow Him as fishers of men, laborers in the vineyard to build boys and mend men and bring all unto Christ. We are stirred in our souls as we repeat the words of the well-known refrain:

Called to serve Him, heav’nly King
of glory,
Chosen e’er to witness for his
name,
Far and wide we tell the Father’s
story,
Far and wide his love proclaim.
[Hymns, no. 249]

It is no small thing to extend to another a call to serve; neither is it insignificant to receive such a call. President Spencer W. Kimball often taught, “Let there be no ‘ditch bank’ appointments in this Church.” Calls to serve are to be preceded by careful thought and earnest prayer. As the Lord declared, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

Service to young men

Some of you are called to serve the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. These precious young men come in all sizes and with varying dispositions and different backgrounds. Yours is the privilege to know them individually and to motivate and lead each youth in his quest to qualify for

the Melchizedek Priesthood, a successful mission, a temple marriage, a life of service, and a testimony of truth.

Let us remember that a boy is the only known substance from which a man can be made.

Nobody knows what a boy is
worth;

We’ll have to wait and see.

But every man in a noble place

A boy once used to be.

A proper perspective of our young men is absolutely essential for those called to serve them. They are young, pliable, eager, and filled with unlimited energy. Sometimes they make mistakes. I remember a meeting where we of the First Presidency and the Twelve were reviewing a youthful mistake made by a missionary. The tone was serious and rather critical when Elder LeGrand Richards said: “Now, brethren, if the good Lord wanted to put a forty-year-old head on a nineteen-year-old body, He would have done so. But He didn’t. He placed a nineteen-year-old head on a nineteen-year-old body, and we should be a bit more understanding.” The mood of the group changed, the problem was solved, and we moved on with the meeting.

The years in the Aaronic Priesthood are growing years. They are years of maturing, learning, developing. They are years of emotional highs and lows, a period when wise counseling and proper example by an inspired leader can work wonders and lift lives.

The quorum meetings of the Aaronic Priesthood provide you advisers and members of bishoprics with ideal opportunities to teach and train these young men in gospel scholarship and in dedicated service. Be examples worthy of emulation. Youth need fewer critics and more models to follow. “Teach ye diligently,” said the Lord, “and my grace shall attend you” (D&C 88:78).

Purposes of Church athletics

These young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, many of whom are assembled here tonight, have a vital interest in athletics. The Church recognizes this fact and provides through its activities and athletic programs an opportunity for participation and growth. The enormous financial investment in physical facilities made by the Church, with the anticipation that all may benefit, can provide fellowship and brotherhood as well as the development of athletic skills. These goals, however, are defeated if winning the game overshadows participation in the game. Young men come to play—not to sit on the bench. Ours is the privilege to provide this opportunity.

I remember in my youth a basketball team from the Twenty-fifth Ward of the Pioneer Stake that had ten young men participating. A wise leader decided not to play just the five best, with the other five substituting here and there. Rather, he formed two teams with balanced ability and age. One team of five played the first and third periods, while the remaining team of five played the second and fourth periods. It was not a contest between bench warmers and active players, but a situation where morale was high, playing time was equal, and games were played and won in the right spirit. No participant in Church-sponsored athletic contests should warm the bench for the entire game.

Value of Scouting

Scouting is another area of vital interest to young men. Much has been said in the media of late regarding Scouting. Let me affirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not diminished in any way its support of the Scouting movement. President Spencer W. Kimball de-

clared that the Church endorses Scouting "and will seek to provide leadership which will help boys keep close to their families and close to the Church as they develop the qualities of citizenship and character and fitness which Scouting represents. . . .

"We've remained strong and firm in our support of this great movement for boys and of the Oath and the Law which are at its center" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, pp. 50-51; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 36).

President Ezra Taft Benson described Scouting as "a noble program," saying, "It is a builder of character, not only in the boys, but also in the men who provide the leadership" (. . . *So Shall Ye Reap* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960], p. 138).

Brethren, if ever there were a time when the principles of Scouting were vitally needed—that time is now. If ever there were a generation who would benefit by keeping physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight—that generation is the present generation.

A few years ago a Scouting skill saved a life—in my own family. My nephew's son, eleven-year-old Craig Dearden, successfully completed his requirements for Scouting's swimming award. His father beamed his approval, while mother tenderly placed an affectionate kiss. Little did those attending the court of honor realize the life-or-death impact of that award. Later that very afternoon, it was Craig who spotted a dark object at the deep end of the swimming pool. It was Craig who, without fear, plunged into the pool to investigate and brought to the surface his own little brother. Tiny Scott was so still, so blue, so lifeless. Recalling the life-saving procedures he had learned and practiced, Craig and others responded in the true tradition of Scouting. Suddenly there was a cry, breathing, movement, life. Is Scouting rele-

vant? Ask a mother, a father, a family who know a Scouting skill saved a son and brother.

We can succeed in our callings

Many of you are serving as members of bishoprics, of high councils, and as officers in priesthood quorums. At times, your tasks may seem overwhelming, and discouragement may creep into your lives. Our Heavenly Father has inspired your call and desires that you succeed. Through His beloved Son, our Savior, we learn:

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (D&C 4:2-3).

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord counseled: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

"Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:33-34).

Through humble prayer, diligent preparation, and faithful service, we can succeed in our sacred callings. Some priesthood bearers are gifted with the ability to reach out to the less active and renew the faith and rekindle the desire to once again return to the fold. Give such specially endowed brethren an assignment which will utilize this talent. Other brethren have the ability to work with youth, to win their respect, prompt their determination to overcome temptation, and lead with love these choice young spirits as they travel along that pathway which, when followed, provides eternal life. The Lord will hear your prayers and guide your decisions, for this is His work in which we are engaged.

I have frequently said that there is no feeling to surpass that feeling which engulfs us when we recognize that we have been on the Lord's errand and He has allowed us to help fulfill His purposes.

Promptings to serve

Every bishop can testify to the promptings which attend calls to serve in the Church. Frequently the call seems to be for the benefit not so much of those to be taught or led as for the person who is to teach or lead.

As a bishop, I worried about any members who were inactive, not attending, not serving. Such was my thought one day as I drove down the street where Ben and Emily lived. They were older—even in the twilight period of life. Aches and pains of advancing years caused them to withdraw from activity to the shelter of their home— isolated, detached, shut out from the mainstream of daily life and association.

That day I felt the unmistakable prompting to park my car and visit Ben and Emily, even though I was on my way to a meeting. It was a sunny weekday afternoon. I approached the door to their home and knocked. Emily answered. When she recognized me, her bishop, she exclaimed: "All day long I have waited for my phone to ring. It has been silent. I hoped that the postman would deliver a letter. He brought only bills. Bishop, how did you know today is my birthday?"

I answered, "God knows, Emily, for He loves you."

In the quiet of their living room, I said to Ben and Emily: "I don't know why I was directed here today, but our Heavenly Father knows. Let's kneel in prayer and ask Him why." This we did, and the answer came. Emily, who had a beautiful voice, was asked to sing in the

choir—even to provide a solo for the forthcoming ward conference. Ben was asked to speak to the Aaronic Priesthood young men and recount a special experience in his life when his safety was assured by responding to the promptings of the Spirit.

She sang. He spoke. Hearts were gladdened by the return to activity of Ben and Emily. They rarely missed a sacrament meeting from that day to the time each was called home. The language of the Spirit had been spoken. It had been heard. It had been understood. Hearts were touched and lives saved.

As priesthood leaders, we soon discover that some of our work, though not recorded on any written report, is of vital significance. The visits to the homes of quorum members, blessing the sick, helping a member with a project, or comforting grieving hearts when a loved one passes on are all sacred privileges of priesthood service. True, they may not be recorded on a written report, but more important, they find lodgment in the soul and bring joy to the heart. They are also known of the Lord.

Should our load seem heavy or the results of our efforts discouraging, we may well recall the words of President Kimball to some who noted his undeviating devotion to his calling even in his advancing years: "My life is like my shoes—to be worn out in service" ("He Is at Peace," *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, p. 41).

Example of Jiri Snederfler

I trust that all young men here tonight are preparing now to serve a full-time mission in the service of the Lord. ElRay L. Christiansen often said, "Your mission is the mold in which your life will be cast." Prepare to serve worthily, with an eye single to the glory of God and His purposes. You will

never know the full influence of your testimony and your service, but you will return with gladness for having had the privilege of responding to a sacred call to serve the Master. You will be forever loved by those to whom you bring the light of truth. Your teachings will be found in their service. Your examples will be guides to follow. Your faith will prompt courage to meet life's challenges.

Let me provide an example. When I first visited Czechoslovakia, accompanied by Hans B. Ringger, long before the freedom bell sounded, I was met by Jiri Snederfler, our leader through this dark period, and Sister Olga Snederfler, his wife. I went to their home in Prague where the branch met. Displayed on the walls of the room in which we assembled were picture after picture of the Salt Lake Temple. I said to Sister Snederfler, "Your husband must truly love the temple."

She responded, "I, too; I, too."

We sat down for some soup Sister Snederfler had prepared, after which she brought out a treasure trove: an album containing individual pictures of the missionaries who were serving there in 1950 when the government edict came for the mission to be closed. As she slowly leafed through the pictures of different missionaries, she would say, "Wonderful boy, wonderful boy."

Brother Snederfler has been a courageous Church leader in Czechoslovakia and has been willing to put everything on the line for the gospel. When the opportunity came that we would seek recognition for the Church in that country, the government leaders, then Communist, said: "Don't send an American. Don't send a German. Don't send a Swiss. Send a citizen of Czechoslovakia."

There were ominous implications in that particular statement because to have admitted that you were a church

leader during this period of the prohibition of religion was tantamount to possible imprisonment. And yet, this call came to Brother Snederfler to be the designated person to go before the government and to forthrightly state that he was the leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for all of Czechoslovakia and that he was seeking recognition for his church. He later told me that he had been somewhat frightened and had asked for the prayers of his brothers and sisters in the Prague Branch. He went to his sweet wife, Olga, and said to her: "I love you. I don't know when, or if, I'll be back, but I love the gospel, and I must follow my Savior."

With that spirit of faith and devotion, Brother Snederfler went before the government officials and acknowledged that he was the leader of the Church and that he was there to seek a restoration of the recognition the Church had enjoyed long years before. In the meantime Elder Russell M. Nelson had been working tirelessly to bring about the desired decision. Later, Brother Snederfler heard the good news: "Your church is again recognized in Czechoslovakia." How eager Brother Snederfler was to tell his dear wife and the other stalwart members of the Church the wonderful news that once again missionaries could come to Czechoslovakia and the Church could provide a haven for freedom of worship in that nation. It was a happy day for Czechoslovakia.

Where are Jiri and Olga Snederfler today? Just last month they responded to their calls to serve as temple president and matron of the Freiberg Germany Temple, where faithful members of the Church in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and surrounding nations attend. These two saintly souls find themselves each day in the Lord's house they so dearly love.

And what of Richard Winder, one of the former missionaries of whom

Olga Snederfler exclaimed, "Wonderful boy, wonderful boy"? He is now the president of the Czechoslovakia Prague Mission, responding to the call to him and his wife, Barbara, to reopen the work in that country.

Great shall be their reward

To the Snederflers, the Winders, and to all who willingly respond to the sacred call of service comes the commendation of the Lord: "I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

"Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory" (D&C 76:5-6).

Called to know the richness of his blessing—
Sons and daughters, children of a King—
Glad of heart, his holy name confessing,
Praises unto him we bring.
Onward, ever onward, as we glory in his name;
Onward, ever onward, as we glory in his name;
Forward, pressing forward, as a triumph song we sing.
God our strength will be; press forward ever,
Called to serve our King.
[*Hymns*, no. 249]

May we ever be found serving faithfully, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson, for your challenging and inspirational remarks. Those attending the Sunday morning session tomorrow are reminded that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00

and you should be in your places by 9:15.

We express our appreciation to the combined men's choir who have sung so beautifully tonight. Following

my remarks they will conclude by singing "God of Our Fathers," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Horacio A. Tenorio of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we have had an excellent meeting. Much has been spoken worthy of remembrance and application in our lives. I endorse and commend to you what the Brethren have said. I hope that every man and boy, wherever you may be, may leave this meeting tonight with a greater desire and a stronger resolution to live more worthy of the divine priesthood which each of us holds.

Two anniversaries

I speak to you in a somewhat personal tone, not to boast but by way of testimony and in a spirit of gratitude.

This conference marks two personal anniversaries for me. Thirty years ago at the October conference I was sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Ten years ago I was sustained as a Counselor in the First Presidency. I am deeply grateful to you and your families for your sustaining hands and hearts and prayers. Thank you. I confess I have never felt adequate to these tremendous callings. I suppose that every man and woman in this Church has those feelings in whatever office or calling he or she may be asked to serve.

Growth of the Church

I received a letter the other day from a grandson serving a mission in Poland. He is laboring with Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander in an area where they are trying to open the work. It is difficult. He wrote, "I am presi-

dent of a branch with four members, and I feel so inadequate."

I need not remind any of you, even you who are deacons, that it is an awesome thing to be clothed with the holy priesthood and to have the responsibility, great or small, to assist God our Eternal Father in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters of all generations. No one of us can comprehend the magnitude and full meaning of that responsibility. But with our limited knowledge, we know we must be faithful and diligent in carrying forward our duty.

Remarkable and miraculous things happen when we do so. May I remind you of the rich and wonderful fruits of your labors over a period of years. I hesitate to use statistics, but these represent the results of your service and the mighty blessings of the Lord.

In the thirty years since I was ordained an Apostle, the membership of the Church has grown from 1,800,000 to a present estimated membership of 8,040,000, or an increase of 441 percent.

The number of stakes has grown from 345 to 1,817. That represents a 527 percent increase. Admittedly, we are creating smaller stakes and more of them in an effort to improve efficiency of administration. Nonetheless, in the time during which many of us have served, we have seen a miracle.

I have seen in the season of my Apostleship the corps of full-time missionaries grow from 10,000 to approximately 45,000, for an increase of 425

percent, with a comparable growth in missions from 67 to 267, or a 398 percent growth.

Now these are statistics, not particularly interesting in table form, but tremendously significant in the lives of millions of the sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father who live in 135 nations and territories scattered across the earth where the Church is established.

When I think of these things, I feel like standing and shouting hallelujah. But more appropriately, I feel to kneel and say in humility, thanks be to God and His beloved Son, our Redeemer, for the growth of this Their work, and thanks be to my brothers and sisters, young and old, you who have been faithful and diligent in your duty in causing this to happen. This has been a joyful thing to observe.

Experience with sorrow

But during these ten years that I have served in the Presidency, I have also experienced much of sorrow. It is out of this experience that I wish to speak a little further. For a full decade now I have participated in the task of sitting in judgment on the worthiness of those who plead to come back into the Church after having been excommunicated. In every case there had been a serious violation of Church standards of conduct. In most cases there had been adultery, and in the majority of cases, husbands were the offenders. Disciplinary action had been taken against them. As months passed they longed for what they previously had. A spirit of repentance came into their hearts.

As one of these men said to me, "I really never understood nor appreciated the gift of the Holy Ghost until it was taken from me."

Unhappiness of women

I have spoken on three or four occasions to the women of the Church during the past ten years. I have received in response to these various talks a substantial number of letters. I have kept some of them in a file marked "Unhappy Women."

These letters have come from many areas. But they are all written in the same tone. I wish to read you a portion of one of them which was received only last week. The writer has granted me permission to do so. I will not disclose any names.

Said she: "I met my husband when he was a freshman. He was from a very active family with many years of service in the Church. He was so enthused about serving a mission. I thought we shared the gospel as our most important value in this life. We both enjoyed music and nature and had a high priority on gaining knowledge. We dated a few months, easily fell in love, and wrote to one another while he served an honorable mission. When he came back home, he got back into school and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We followed the counsel of Church leaders and began our family. I had been attending [the university] on an Honors at Entrance scholarship, but I became pregnant and sick and left school to devote my time and energy to my husband and infant son.

"For the next eighteen years I supported my husband while he finished school, got some work experience, and started his own business. We both served in leadership positions in the Church and community. We had five wonderful children. I taught the children the gospel, how to work, how to serve, how to communicate, and how to play the piano. I baked bread; canned peaches, apples, tomatoes; sewed dresses and quilts; cleaned house; and

tended my flowers and vegetables. In many ways it seemed that we were an ideal family. Our relationship was sometimes sweet and sometimes difficult. Things were never perfect because I am not a perfect woman and he is not a perfect man, but many things were good. I did not expect perfection; I just kept trying.

"Then came the crash. About a year ago he decided that he never loved me and that our marriage was a mistake from the beginning. He was convinced that there was nothing in our relationship for him. He filed for divorce and moved out. 'Wait,' I kept saying. 'Oh, no. Stop! Don't do this. Why are you leaving? What is wrong? Please, talk to me. Look at our children. What of all our dreams? Remember our covenants. No, no! Divorce is not the answer.' He would not hear me. I thought I would die.

"Now I am a single parent. What an enormous load of heartache, pain, and loneliness is behind that statement. It explains so much trauma and so much anger from my teenage sons. It explains so many tears from my little girls. It explains so many sleepless nights, so many family demands and needs. Why am I in this mess? What did I choose wrong? How will I ever get through school? How will I get through this week? Where is my husband? Where is the father of my children? I join the ranks of tired women whose husbands leave them. I have no money, no job. I have children to care for, bills to pay, and not much hope."

I do not know if her former husband may be in this audience somewhere. If he is listening, I may receive from him a letter justifying what he has done. I know there are two sides to every issue. But somehow, I cannot understand how a man who holds the holy priesthood and who has entered into sacred and binding covenants before the Lord could justify abandoning his

responsibilities for his wife of eighteen years and the five children who exist because of him and of whose flesh and blood and heritage they have partaken.

The problem is not new. I suppose it is as old as the human race. Certainly it existed among the Nephites. Jacob, brother of Nephi, speaking as a prophet to his people, declared:

"For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

"... Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:31, 35).

Discipline a violent temper

Permit me to read from another letter. Said the writer: "My husband is a good man with many outstanding qualities and character traits, but underneath it all there is a strong streak of authoritarianism. . . . His volatile temper flares up often enough to remind me of all the potential ugliness of which he is capable.

"President Hinckley, . . . please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is inexcusable, never acceptable, and a cowardly way of dealing with differences, especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder."

Now, I believe that most marriages in the Church are happy, that both husbands and wives in those marriages experience a sense of security and love, of mutual dependence, and an equal sharing of burdens. I am confident that the children in those homes, at least in the vast majority of them, are

growing up with a sense of peace and security, knowing that they are appreciated and loved by both of their parents, who, they feel, love one another. But I am confident, my brethren, that there is enough of the opposite to justify what I am saying.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger? How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation.

Said the writer of Proverbs, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

A violent temper is such a terrible, corrosive thing. And the tragedy is that it accomplishes no good; it only feeds evil with resentment and rebellion and pain. To any man or boy within the sound of my voice who has trouble controlling his tongue, may I suggest that you plead with the Lord for the strength to overcome your weakness, that you apologize to those you have offended, and that you marshal within yourselves the power to discipline your tongue.

To the boys who are here, may I suggest that you watch your temper now, in these formative years of your life. As Brother Haight has reminded you, this is the season to develop the power and capacity to discipline yourselves. You may think it is the macho thing to flare up in anger and swear and profane the name of the Lord. It is not the macho thing. It is an indication of weakness. Anger is not an expression of strength. It is an indication of one's inability to control his thoughts, words, his emotions. Of course it is easy to get angry. When the weakness of anger takes over, the strength of rea-

son leaves. Cultivate within yourselves the mighty power of self-discipline.

Sacredness of marriage covenants

Now I move to another corrosive element that afflicts all too many marriages. It is interesting to me that two of the Ten Commandments deal with this: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:14, 17). Ted Koppel, moderator of ABC's "Nightline" program, is reported as saying the following to a group of students at Duke University concerning slogans that were proposed to reduce drugs and immorality:

"We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. . . . But the answer is *NO*! Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but *NO* because it is wrong, because we have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not *The Ten Suggestions*" (address given at Duke University, 10 May 1987).

Think about that for a moment. What Moses brought down were Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.

Altogether too many men, leaving their wives at home in the morning and going to work, where they find attractively dressed and attractively made-up young women, regard themselves as young and handsome and as an irresistible catch. They complain that their wives do not look the same as they did twenty years ago when they married them. To which I say, "Who would, after living with you for twenty years?"

The tragedy is that some men are ensnared by their own foolishness and their own weakness. They throw to the wind the most sacred and solemn of covenants, entered into in the house of the Lord and sealed under the authority of the holy priesthood. They set aside their wives who have been faithful, who have loved and cared for them, who have struggled with them in times of poverty only to be discarded in times of affluence. They have left their children fatherless. They have avoided with every kind of artifice the payment of court-mandated alimony and child support.

Do I sound harsh and negative? Yes, I feel that way as I deal with case after case and have done so over a period of time. Wrote Paul, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). In that same epistle, he said to Timothy, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Now I recognize that there may be some few cases where conditions of the marriage are totally intolerable. But these cases are in the minority. And even in these cases, where a marriage has been undertaken and children are brought into the world, there is a responsibility, binding and with accountability before God, to provide care for those for whose lives the father is responsible.

The complaint of a husband, after eighteen years of marriage and five children, that he no longer loves his wife is, in my judgment, a feeble excuse for the violation of covenants made before God and also the evasion of the responsibilities that are the very strength of the society of which we are a part. The finding of fault with consequent divorce is usually preceded by a long period in which little mistakes are spoken of in harsh and angry language, where tiny molehills of difference grow into great mountains of conflict. I am

satisfied that the more unkindly a wife is treated, the less attractive she becomes. She loses pride in herself. She develops a feeling of worthlessness. Of course it shows.

A husband who domineers his wife, who demeans and humiliates her, and who makes officious demands upon her not only injures her, but he also belittles himself. And in many cases, he plants a pattern of future similar behavior in his sons.

No enduring happiness without women

My brethren, you who have had conferred upon you the priesthood of God, you know, as I know, that there is no enduring happiness, that there is no lasting peace in the heart, no tranquility in the home without the companionship of a good woman. Our wives are not our inferiors.

Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood side by side in the garden. They were expelled from the garden together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.

Now, brethren, I know I have spoken of a minority. But the depth of the tragedy which afflicts that minority, and particularly the victims of that minority, has impelled me to say what I have said. There is an old adage that says, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

What I have spoken I have said with a desire to be helpful and, in some

cases, in the spirit of a rebuke followed by an increase of love toward those whom I may have rebuked.

Beauty of happy marriage

How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy.

The years pass. The children eventually leave the home, one by one. And the father and the mother are again alone. But they have each other to talk with, to depend on, to nurture, to encourage, and to bless. There comes the autumn of life and a looking back with satisfaction and gladness. Through all of the years there has been loyalty, one to the other. There has been deference

and courtesy. Now there is a certain mellowness, a softening, an effect that partakes of a hallowed relationship. They realize that death may come anytime, usually to one first with a separation of a season brief or lengthy. But they know also that because their companionship was sealed under the authority of the eternal priesthood and they have lived worthy of the blessings, there will be a reunion sweet and certain.

Brethren, this is the way our Father in Heaven would have it. This is the Lord's way. He has so indicated. His prophets have spoken of it.

It takes effort. It takes self-control. It takes unselfishness. It requires the true essence of love, which is an anxious concern for the well-being and happiness of one's companion. I could wish nothing better for all of you than this, and I pray that this may be your individual blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God of Our Fathers."

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Truth Eternal" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 161st semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Richard G. Scott, Marion D. Hanks, and Lynn A. Mickelsen are seated on the stand. We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brothers Robert Cundick and John

Longhurst at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Truth Eternal" and will now sing "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father," following which Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Eduardo Ayala offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Call to help handcart companies

My beloved brethren and sisters, how blessed we are to meet together in peace in these comfortable and happy circumstances. As I have thought of this October general conference and of the inspired talks we have heard and will hear, my mind has gone back to the events of this same first Sunday of October 135 years ago when a similar meeting was convened here on Temple Square.

We did not have this great Tabernacle at that time. Our people then met in the Old Tabernacle, which stood just to the south of us. It was Sunday, October 5, 1856. On Saturday, the day before, a small group of missionaries returning from England arrived in the valley. They had been able to make relatively good time because their teams were strong and their wagons light. Franklin D. Richards was their leader. They immediately sought out President Brigham Young. They told him that hundreds of men,

women, and children were scattered along the trail that led from the Missouri River to the Salt Lake Valley. Most of them were pulling handcarts, two companies of these, with two smaller companies following behind with ox teams and wagons. The first group was probably at this time in the area of Scotts Bluff, more than four hundred miles from their destination, with the others behind them. It was October, and they would be trapped in the snows of winter and perish unless help was sent.

Brigham Young had known nothing of this. There was, of course, at that time no rapid means of communication—no radio, no telegraph, no fast mail. He was then fifty-five years of age. The next morning, the Sabbath, he stood before the people in the Tabernacle and said:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. On the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren

and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here.' . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. . . .

"I shall call upon the Bishops this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules. They are in this Territory, and we must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. *Go and bring in those people now on the plains*" (quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960], pp. 120-21).

The next morning anvils were ringing in the blacksmith shops as horses were shod and wagons were repaired and loaded.

The following morning, Tuesday, October 7th, "sixteen good four-mule teams and twenty-seven hardy young men headed eastward with the first installment of provisions. The gathering of more to follow, was pushed vigorously" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 124).

"By the end of October, two hundred and fifty teams were on the road to give relief" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 125).

There have been many eloquent sermons preached from the pulpits on Temple Square, but none more eloquent than those spoken in that October conference of 135 years ago.

Story of Ellen Pucell Unthank

Now let me leave that for a moment and pick up the story from another position.

A few weeks ago, it was my privilege to dedicate a monument to the memory of Ellen Pucell Unthank. It stands on the campus of Southern Utah University in Cedar City, Utah. It is a bronze figure, beautiful and engaging. It is of a little nine-year-old girl, standing with one foot tiptoe, her hair blowing back in the wind, a smile on her face, eagerly looking forward.

Ellen Pucell, as she was named, was born in a beautiful area of England where the hills are soft and rolling and the grass is forever green. Her parents, Margaret and William Pucell, were converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the time of their baptism in 1837 until the spring of 1856, they had scrimped and saved to go to the Zion of their people in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America. Now that was possible if they were willing to pull a handcart one thousand miles across a wilderness. They accepted that challenge, as did hundreds of their fellow converts.

Margaret and William took with them their two daughters, Maggie, fourteen, and Ellen, nine. They said good-bye to loved ones they would never again see in mortality. Near the end of May they set sail from Liverpool with 852 of their convert associates. My wife's grandmother, thirteen-year-old Mary Goble, was a part of that company and, I like to think, played with those little girls aboard ship.

After six weeks at sea, they landed at Boston and took the steam train to Iowa City. They had expected their handcarts and wagons would be ready. They were not. There was a serious and disastrous delay. It was not until late in July that they began the long march, first to Winter Quarters on the

Missouri and from there to the Rocky Mountains.

The Pucells were assigned to the Martin Handcart Company. The Goble family, my wife's forebears, became a part of the Cluff Wagon Company, which followed the handcarts to give help if needed.

With high expectation they began their journey. Through sunlight and storm, through dust and mud, they trudged beside the Platte River through all of the month of September and most of October. On October 19, they reached the last crossing of the Platte, a little west of the present city of Casper, Wyoming. The river was wide, the current strong, and chunks of ice were floating in the water. They were now traveling without sufficient food. Bravely they waded through the icy stream. A terrible storm arose with fierce winds bringing drifting sand, hail, and snow. When they climbed the far bank of the river, their wet clothing froze to their bodies. Exhausted, freezing, and without strength to go on, some quietly sat down, and while they sat, they died.

Ellen's mother, Margaret, became sick. Her husband lifted her onto the cart. They were now climbing in elevation toward the Continental Divide, and it was uphill all the way. Can you see this family in your imagination?—the mother too sick and weak to walk, the father thin and emaciated, struggling to pull the cart as the two little girls push from behind with swirling, cold winds about them, and around them are hundreds of others similarly struggling.

They came to a stream of freezing water. The father, while crossing, slipped on a rock and fell. Struggling to his feet, he reached the shore, wet and chilled. Sometime later he sat down to rest. He quietly died, his senses numbed by the cold. His wife died five days later. I do not know how or where their frozen bodies were buried in that

desolate, white wilderness. I do know that the ground was frozen and that the snow was piled in drifts and that the two little girls were now orphans.

Rescue party arrives

Between 135 and 150 of the Martin company alone perished along that trail of suffering and death. It was in these desperate and terrible circumstances—hungry, exhausted, their clothes thin and ragged—that they were found by the rescue party. As the rescuers appeared on the western horizon breaking a trail through the snow, they seemed as angels of mercy. And indeed they were. The beleaguered emigrants shouted for joy, some of them. Others, too weak to shout, simply wept and wept and wept.

There was now food to eat and some warmer clothing. But the suffering was not over, nor would it ever end in mortality. Limbs had been frozen, and the gangrenous flesh sloughed off from the bones.

The carts were abandoned, and the survivors were crowded into the wagons of the rescuers. The long rough journey of three hundred, four hundred, even five hundred miles between them and this valley was especially slow and tedious because of the storms. On November 30, 104 wagons, loaded with suffering human cargo, came into the Salt Lake Valley. Word of their expected arrival had preceded them. It was Sunday, and again the Saints were gathered in the Tabernacle. Brigham Young stood before the congregation and said:

"As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes. . . .

"The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to . . . prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them. . . .

"Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted . . . we want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them" (quoted in Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 139).

The two orphan girls, Maggie and Ellen, were among those with frozen limbs. Ellen's were the most serious. The doctor in the valley, doing the best he could, amputated her legs just below the knees. The surgical tools were crude. There was no anesthesia. The stumps never healed. She grew to womanhood, married William Unthank, and bore and reared an honorable family of six children. Moving about on those stumps, she served her family, her neighbors, and the Church with faith and good cheer and without complaint, though she was never without pain. Her posterity are numerous, and among them are educated and capable men and women who love the Lord whom she loved and who love the cause for which she suffered.

We became acquainted with God

Years later, a group in Cedar City were talking about her and others who were in those ill-fated companies. Members of the group spoke critically of the Church and its leaders because the company of converts had been permitted to start so late in the season. I now quote from a manuscript which I have:

"One old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it. Then he arose and said things that no person who heard will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

"He said in substance, 'I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about.

Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. A mistake to send the handcart company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it, and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives, for we became acquainted with him in our extremities'" (manuscript in my possession).

That speaker was Francis Webster, who was twenty-six years of age when with his wife and infant child he went through that experience. He became a leader in the Church and a leader in the communities of southern Utah.

Our Redeemer's sacrifice

Now, my brothers and sisters, I have spent a long time telling that story, perhaps too long. This is October of 1991, and that episode of 135 years ago is behind us. But I have told it because it is true and because the spirit of that saga is as contemporary as is this morning.

I wish to remind everyone within my hearing that the comforts we have, the peace we have, and, most important, the faith and knowledge of the things of God that we have were bought with a terrible price by those who have gone before us. Sacrifice has always been a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The crowning element of our faith is our conviction of our living God, the Father of us all, and of His Beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world. It is because of our Redeemer's

life and sacrifice that we are here. It is because of His sacrificial atonement that we and all of the sons and daughters of God will partake of the salvation of the Lord. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). It is because of the sacrificial redemption wrought by the Savior of the world that the great plan of the eternal gospel is made available to us, under which those who die in the Lord shall not taste of death but shall have the opportunity of going on to a celestial and eternal glory.

In our own helplessness, He becomes our rescuer, saving us from damnation and bringing us to eternal life.

In times of despair, in seasons of loneliness and fear, He is there on the horizon to bring succor and comfort and assurance and faith. He is our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Lord and our God.

Those on the high, cold plains of Wyoming came to know Him in their extremity as perhaps few come to know Him. But to every troubled soul, every man or woman in need, to those everywhere who are pulling heavy burdens through the bitter storms of life, He has said:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

A mission of saving

Now, I am grateful that today none of our people are stranded on the Wyoming highlands. But I know that all about us there are many who are in need of help and who are deserving of

rescue. Our mission in life, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be a mission of saving. There are the homeless, the hungry, the destitute. Their condition is obvious. We have done much. We can do more to help those who live on the edge of survival.

We can reach out to strengthen those who wallow in the mire of pornography, gross immorality, and drugs. Many have become so addicted that they have lost power to control their own destinies. They are miserable and broken. They can be salvaged and saved.

There are wives who are abandoned and children who weep in homes where there is abuse. There are fathers who can be rescued from evil and corrosive practices that destroy and bring only heartbreak.

It is not with those on the high plains of Wyoming that we need be concerned today. It is with many immediately around us—in our families, in our wards and stakes, in our neighborhoods and communities.

Put aside our selfishness

"And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18).

If we are to build that Zion of which the prophets have spoken and of which the Lord has given mighty promise, we must set aside our consuming selfishness. We must rise above our love for comfort and ease, and in the very process of effort and struggle, even in our extremity, we shall become better acquainted with our God.

Let us never forget that we have a marvelous heritage received from great and courageous people who endured unimaginable suffering and demonstrated unbelievable courage for the cause they loved. You and I know

what we should do. God help us to do it when it needs to be done, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Behold, the Tabernacle of God" without announcement.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Behold, the Tabernacle of God."

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Tabernacle Choir's European tour

In June of this year, Sister Nelson and I had the great privilege of accompanying the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on its historic concert tour in Europe. We are grateful to the First Presidency for that assignment. Much has been written regarding the success of the choir and of its favorable influence that will yet continue. Members and friends of the Church worldwide join with me in expressing appreciation to the officers, staff, directors, accompanists, and all vocalists for their wonderful service. I won't mention anyone by name; I will simply refer to them all as members of the choir.

I'll not comment as a music critic would. While musical experts of the world focus on what choir members can do, I would like to focus on what choir members can be. This I do because I witnessed in choir members great examples that can inspire and improve the lives of each of you who honestly strives to emulate the Lord who said, "I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:16; see also John 13:15). So we should strive to learn from His example—and from the good example of those who love and follow Him.

Attributes of disciples

Members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir are not superhuman. They

are ordinary people with ordinary frailties. But therein lies the power of their example. They believe this promise from the Lord: "Because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong" (D&C 135:5).

Before attending their first rehearsal, choir members brought with them not only musical education and talent but qualities of personal righteousness. Before singing to their first audience, they were blessed by another promise from our Savior:

"Ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:11).

Have you not learned that strength comes to an ordinary soul when given an extraordinary calling? The choir has! Indeed, each member seemed to be imbued with a real sense of mission, striving for those ten traits that missionaries are expected to possess and practice:

"Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence" (D&C 4:6).

Those are attributes the Lord deserves from His disciples. Because each of us is to be "an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12), I would like to address those ten topics as members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir "were

our examples" (1 Corinthians 10:6) in many memorable ways.

Faith

Their great faith was strengthened by the faith of our leaders. I pay tribute to the First Presidency and to leaders of the choir who had the foresight to plan as they did and when they did. How bold and inspired they were to conceive this tour many months—even years—before Europe's unwelcoming walls began to crumble! The Brethren had the faith to believe that the choir could sing in cities such as Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, Leningrad, and Moscow long before such dreams seemed plausible. Then in January 1991, hopeful plans were seriously threatened when war erupted in the Persian Gulf. Even then, our leaders decided against canceling the tour. They knew of its potential for good and had faith that countless obstacles could be overcome. Often they prayed that the choir's tour might be successfully accomplished.

Those prayers were answered!

Think of the timing. In one thousand years of Russia's existence, its first popular national election ever to be held occurred in June 1991. Six days later, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in Moscow! That very night after the strains of "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (see *Hymns*, no. 30) had resounded from the Bolshoi Theater, the vice president of the republic announced that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been granted recognition in the Republic of Russia. On the eve of a supreme crisis that was yet ahead, Russian people heard songs of faith, courage, hope, and love.

That faith of our Church leaders filled the hearts of members, families, and friends of the choir as well. Real were the risks of separation of husbands and wives, of parents and chil-

dren. Hundreds of dependents were temporarily deprived of moms or dads for almost a month. Thanks be to all who cared for those families—in faith. If each of us could muster that same faith in the service we are called to render, we would also be blessed.

Virtue

Virtue radiated from the choir. Each member seemed to exemplify President Brigham Young's counsel:

"Learn the will of God, keep his commandments and do his will, and you will be a virtuous person" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 194).

They applied the word of God (see Alma 31:5) not only in song but in sermons of example. After one concert, I was greeted by an individual who expressed gratitude in an unusual way. He said, "I am thankful for the choir's message."

I asked, "What message did you receive?"

His answer: "The choir was trying to teach me a better way to live."

That comment seemed profound to me. What inspired him to feel such a force for good? Was it complicated classical music or the excellence of its rendition? I doubt it. I believe it was more likely communication by the Spirit, which allowed both the giver and receiver to be edified (see D&C 50:21–22). And very possibly, the spirit of the listener was moved most by melodies soft and simple, sung with sweet sincerity. When the choir sang "The Lord's Prayer," for example, audiences were hushed and attentive. They seemed to understand, without fully knowing either the language or the history of the song.

The virtue of choir members brought blessings to their own lives.

When the tour was completed and each was safely home, I thought of this promise from the Lord: "If thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue before me, I will preserve thy life" (D&C 25:2). That same promise applies to me and to you.

Knowledge

Knowledge is essential to competent service for any missionary. So it was with members of the choir in this tour to eight nations. To communicate more effectively, the choir sang in ten languages! In these times of changing political views, much study was also required to determine which songs should be sung and which should not be sung.

But their quest for knowledge did not begin or end with music. They eagerly studied the culture, history, and ways of the people they had come to serve. On a moment's notice, their knowledge of the gospel had to be retrieved when questioned by the media or interested individuals.

In these lands that have known so much of hardship and strife, choir members echoed the scriptural hope "that perhaps they might bring [others] to the knowledge of the Lord their God, . . . that they might also be brought to rejoice in the Lord their God, that they might become friendly to one another, and that there should be no more contentions in all the land" (Mosiah 28:2).

Members of the choir knew "that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness" (Alma 24:30), lives would never again be the same.

Just think of the good you can do if you accept a difficult challenge and pursue knowledge—then use it to bless others as did the choir!

Temperance

"To knowledge," the Apostle Peter wrote, add "temperance" (2 Peter 1:6). Temperance suggests sobriety and self-restraint in action. It reminds one of covenants made.

Members of the choir were always temperate and well-disciplined, not from without but from within. Completely obedient to the Word of Wisdom, they were blessed with health and strength. Keeping a schedule that left little time for leisure, their grueling pace allowed them to perform for audiences that otherwise might have been excluded.

Repeatedly, scriptures teach that we be "temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25; Alma 7:23; 38:10; D&C 12:8). Temperance can protect each of us from the aftermath of excess.

Patience

Patience is one of the most practiced attributes of choir members. Checking into a hotel with a group of five hundred travelers and more than a thousand pieces of luggage provided practice in patience nearly every day. One dear sister never did receive her baggage. Her patience flowered into ingenuity as she attempted to feel fresh with the same clothing day after day.

Patience is a divine attribute. The Book of Mormon invites us to "come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (Mosiah 4:6).

Although choir members are not perfect, each one seemed to epitomize scriptural counsel to "continue in patience until ye are perfected" (D&C 67:13). If they can do it, each of us can also develop that precious talent of patience.

Brotherly kindness

Brotherly kindness was a hallmark of this tour. Never did I hear a disparaging remark. Especially did I watch those heroic members of the choir with serious physical disabilities. Some have severe visual handicaps and can read music only with their fingers. Others walk solely with the aid of crutches or appliances. Their great courage was superbly matched by the courtesy of companions who gave much that all might triumph together. Indeed, they typified this scriptural analogy:

"The whole body fitly joined together . . . according to the effectual working . . . of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Brotherly kindness overcomes the rudeness of selfish intent. Each of us can develop brotherly kindness at home, at school, at work, or at play.

Charity

The Book of Mormon defines charity as the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). It further teaches that the "Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30; see also Ether 12:34).

I saw choir members extend that love to countless souls. For those in need, members quietly contributed money, food, and goods. They shared freely of their precious time and talent without any thought of personal acclaim or recompense. Truly, "charity never faileth" any of us (1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46).

Humility

The choir's humility seemed to increase throughout their journey. Though their mounting successes gave

them much to be proud of, members grew into this scriptural pattern:

"They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts" (Helaman 3:35).

Choir members became "subject one to another" (1 Peter 5:5) and imparted "the word of God, one with another" (Alma 1:20) as true disciples do. They were humble and teachable as submissive Saints should be (see Mosiah 3:19; D&C 105:12). Their examples of humility should ennoble our souls.

Diligence

Diligence was demonstrated by all members of the choir but extraordinarily so by one precious mother whom I shall never forget. Just five days after the choir had left America, I was asked to inform her that her beautiful thirty-seven-year-old daughter had died after a long illness. The leaders of this sorrowing mother offered means for her to return home from Europe. She declined the offer. She and her family had already anticipated this possibility. Their decision had been made. It was not to be interpreted as a pattern for anyone else to follow, but for her alone. Her children and grandchildren had pleaded that she remain on assignment. So she continued in all diligence, never missing a single concert! She nobly fulfilled this scriptural counsel: "Therefore be diligent . . . in whatsoever difficult circumstances [you] may be" (D&C 6:18).

Her example can bless each of you, just as it did her family and me.

Godliness

Godliness is an attribute that seems as difficult to define as it is to

attain. Scriptures refer to "the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16; D&C 19:10). Because it is so special, I have chosen to speak of it last.

Simon Peter counseled us "to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

"The power of godliness is manifest" in the ordinances of the priesthood (D&C 84:20). Godliness is not a product of perfection; it comes of concentration and consecration.

Godliness characterizes each of you who truly loves the Lord. You are constantly mindful of the Savior's atonement and rejoice in His unconditional love. Meanwhile you vanquish personal pride and vain ambition. You consider your accomplishments important only if they help establish His kingdom on earth.

Love so amazing, so divine

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir's songs helped to convey their uncommon spirit of godliness. From their hearts the choir sang one number which bore testimony of love so amazing, so divine. Tears moistened the faces of more than a few as they expressed personal feelings of conversion and commitment to godliness. This song which the choir will soon sing includes these verses penned by Isaac Watts:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me
most,
I sacrifice them to his blood. . . .

Were the whole realm of nature
mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!
["Love So Amazing, So Divine"]

Such are lessons taught by those who "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). Unitedly members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir testify of the living Lord and of His Church restored in these latter days, as do I. May God bless us to lift our lives by their example I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Love So Amazing, So Divine" without announcement.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "Love So Amazing, So Divine."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which we shall hear from Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang
"High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Charles Didier

Political and economic changes

During the last two years, we have seen many significant international political events followed by dramatic con-

sequences and changes for the world and also for the Church. We are also witnessing events that, perhaps not as visible but certainly as tangible, pro-

foundly affect the quality of individual lives and families, followed by even more far-reaching consequences and changes specifically in relation to God, churches, and religious behavior. These changes have caused a significant shift in traditional or religious values toward world practices, and this is well described in one verse of modern revelation: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

If we fail to recognize the personal spiritual challenge of political and economic changes and constant new threats to the moral and spiritual stability of individuals and families, we will fail to recognize the needs and requirements to adapt to these new conditions by finding within ourselves a firm and true foundation that will determine a firm and true behavior.

A testimony is our foundation

What is the true foundation that should motivate us to act accordingly? Elder Heber C. Kimball once said: "Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. . . .

" . . . The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?" (quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945], pp. 449-50).

What is meant by "the light within himself"? That is a testimony, the true

foundation that should determine true behavior.

President Harold B. Lee said, "The real strength of the Church is to be measured by the individual testimonies to be found in the total membership of the Church" (in Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area General Conference 1972, p. 117). Based on this quote, we might also say that the real strength of an individual is to be found in his testimony and in living it.

If the measure of strength and the stability or true foundation of an individual and his subsequent conduct lies in a testimony and we do not fully recognize its importance, or do not understand what it really means, or cannot or will not bear it or share it with others, and if we cannot teach it or explain it to others, maybe we ought to explore the deep, spiritual meaning of it and the blessing of obtaining, maintaining, and sharing a personal, individual testimony.

A testimony is knowledge

Early in the scriptures, the sacredness of the word *testimony* is illustrated when Adam was told that "all things are created and made to bear record of me" (Moses 6:63). It was vital for Adam to have a knowledge of our Father and his Son, and that has not changed in our time and will never change. This applies as well to the principle of gaining a testimony and knowing what it is. It is knowing by the power of the Holy Ghost that God lives and is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see D&C 20:12) and that "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). A testimony is not only a witness that Jesus is the Christ, but also a statement or affirmation of the fact that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the

Son; a conviction that the Book of Mormon has a divine origin and is another testament of Jesus Christ; and a knowledge that the Church of Jesus Christ, with its gospel and holy priesthood, was in truth and fact restored.

Joseph Fielding Smith defined it this way: "A testimony of the gospel is a convincing knowledge given by revelation to the individual who humbly seeks the truth" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-66], 3:31).

Steps to obtain a testimony

What are the essential steps to obtain a testimony? First, to humbly seek the truth, to have a desire to know by exercising belief or faith. When we obtain any blessing from God, such as an answer to prayer or a convincing knowledge, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated (see D&C 130:21). Here, then, are the required standards of the law: ask in the name of Christ and exercise faith in him, have a sincere heart, humbly seek the truth, be receptive, discard preconceived religious concepts, and cleanse yourself from the sins of the world. You must adhere to the rules, tune in correctly to receive the proper signal, and, once in harmony with the Holy Ghost, you may know the truth of all things. This represents a spiritual gift available from God, not to be denied but to profit us. It is permanently available, never to be taken away except by our unbelief or unwillingness to humbly seek the truth.

The second step is to know by revelation, where Spirit speaks to spirit. It is one thing to be able to say, "I believe, I think, I hope that the gospel is true," but it requires personal revelation and personal acknowledgment and recognition to declare, "I *know* that the Church is true."

Alma gives us a perfect example of this convincing knowledge that he received by revelation. In four verses we learn about this light within himself. First, the assurance of his testimony: "Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true" (Alma 5:45). Second, the source of his testimony: "They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God" (5:46). Third, the process of gaining his testimony: "I have fasted and prayed" (5:46). Fourth, the evidence of his testimony: "The Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (5:46). Fifth, the origin of his testimony: "The words which have been spoken by our fathers are true" (5:47). Sixth, the power of his testimony: "I say unto you, that I know of myself . . . that Jesus Christ shall come" (5:48). This convincing knowledge or testimony would not be complete without also accepting the responsibility of carrying such a testimony. And Alma further stated, "I am called . . . to preach . . . to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again" (5:49).

Keys of revelation

Let us now examine the keys of the spirit of revelation.

Key number 1 is to know for yourself. Do not be dependent on someone else.

Key number 2 is to know by the power of the Holy Ghost. Do not look at reason, logic, or the philosophies of men and theories of the world.

Key number 3 is to know by searching the scriptures and the revelations given and published in our day by the prophets—the First Presidency and the Twelve. Do not listen to apostate, unauthorized voices or speculation.

Key number 4 is to know by asking your Heavenly Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. Do not turn to public discussions and forums. The purpose of having and using certain keys is always very simple: to open the right door with a particular key. The purpose of these spiritual keys is to open spiritual doors, one by one, to come to a plain testimony as described by the prophets. When children first start to read, they look at the letters and ask what they are. After a time they can recognize the letters by their names and put them together to form a word. And then a miracle happens. They can read a word, then a sentence, then a book. The steps of gaining a testimony follow the same pattern. We want to know; we begin with what we know; and when we know, we further enrich our knowledge by sharing and practicing what we know.

Testimonies can be lost

Once a testimony is in place, just like a fire that needs fuel and oxygen to burn, it needs to be fed and tended or it will burn out and die. A dying testimony corresponds, in fact, to a forthcoming denial of Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Nephi taught, "For the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law" (2 Nephi 25:28).

Unfortunately, there are those who gain testimonies and then deny them and lose them. How does this happen? If you follow the steps to obtain a testimony, you do exactly the opposite to deny it or lose it. Do not pray; the door to revelation will be closed. Do not be humble but listen to your own superior voice. Do not participate in the ordinances of the gospel but follow the practices of the world. Do not follow Church leaders but be critical of them. Do not listen to prophets and follow their counsel but interpret their

declarations according to your own desires. Do not obey the commandments but live according to your own appetites and desires.

These are only a few of the most evident problems leading to a loss of testimony. As ashes represent the evidence of a dying fire, the demise of a testimony is characterized by spiritual ashes, such as a lack of gospel appetite, charity, and purpose, as well as having feelings of apathy, bitterness, and emptiness. Spiritual ashes might be all that are left of what was once a burning, loving, meaningful, and uplifting testimony.

Bearing of testimonies

To maintain and strengthen a testimony, prophets have always reminded us to bear it and share it. Elder Spencer W. Kimball stated, "To hold his testimony one must bear it often and live worthy of it" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1944, p. 45). Make it known after you know, make its power evident after you know, and live accordingly after you know.

To have a testimony and to share it provides a firm foundation for us to stand on and a way to control our lives in this constantly changing world.

A precious possession

When Moses received the tables upon which the words of the covenant were written, they were called the tables of testimony and were to remain in the ark as a reminder of the covenant between the Lord and his children. Moses and his people had quite a convincing knowledge.

When Joseph Smith received his vision, he also knew. It was an indelible testimony. In his own words, "For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it" (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

These testimonies were true foundations to be built upon and followed by obedience and good works. What about us? Are we any different when we have received a testimony of the covenant? Perhaps we now begin to perceive and understand the importance of a testimony and the strength that can be derived from it, with its mortal and eternal consequences. It is definitely a most precious possession, something to be desired now and forever because it determines our life here and eternal life hereafter.

President Benson, our living prophet, stated: "A testimony is one of the few possessions we may take with us when we leave this life. . . . A testimony of Jesus means that you accept the divine mission of Jesus Christ, embrace His gospel, and do His works; it means you accept the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and his

successors" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, pp. 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 62).

A living prophet has spoken. It is now time for us to stand and be true to our testimonies. May I add my testimony to yours and bear my solemn witness, searched in all humility and acquired by the power of the Holy Ghost, that I know personally that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; that this Church is true and is led by a living prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Nephi's self-reliance

Lehi and his family, after wandering in the wilderness for eight years, came to a land they called Bountiful because it was a place of much fruit and wild honey. They came to a great sea, and they rejoiced unto the Lord because He had preserved them. After they had been in the land Bountiful for a space of many days, the Lord spoke to Nephi and said, "Arise, and get thee into the mountain" (1 Nephi 17:7).

Nephi obeyed the Lord; he went into the mountain and prayed. And the Lord commanded Nephi, "Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters" (1 Nephi 17:8).

Then Nephi asked the Lord, "Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to

construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?" (1 Nephi 17:9).

The Lord instructed Nephi where he could find ore, but then Nephi was on his own. In 1 Nephi, chapter 17, we read:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make a bellows wherewith to blow the fire, of the skins of beasts; and after I had made a bellows, that I might have wherewith to blow the fire, I did smite two stones together that I might make fire. . . .

"And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock" (17:11, 16).

This is one of the more interesting stories we have in the scriptures because it tells of an instance in which the Lord provided help but then stepped aside to allow one of His sons

to exercise his own initiative. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Nephi had asked the Lord for tools instead of a place to find the ore to make the tools. I doubt the Lord would have honored Nephi's request. You see, the Lord knew that Nephi could make the tools, and it is seldom the Lord will do something for us that we can do for ourselves.

Importance of self-reliance

The Lord does help when we go to Him in times of need, especially when we are committed to His work and respond to His will. But the Lord only helps those who are willing to help themselves. He expects His children to be self-reliant to the degree they can be.

Brigham Young instructed the Saints, "Instead of searching after what the Lord is going to do for us, let us inquire what we can do for ourselves" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 293).

Independence and self-reliance are critical to our spiritual and temporal growth. Whenever we get into situations which threaten our self-reliance, we will find our freedoms threatened as well. If we increase our dependence on anything or anyone except the Lord, we will find an immediate decrease in our freedom to act. As President Heber J. Grant declared, "Nothing destroys the individuality of a man, a woman, or a child as much as the failure to be self-reliant" ("Address," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1937, p. 627).

Never before in my life has the doctrine of self-reliance been more needed to be preached and encouraged for the benefit of the Saints. We live in a time of rapid change. Governments are rising and falling. Industries

are blooming and then all too soon becoming obsolete. New discoveries in science are soon overshadowed by new findings. Unless we are continuously expanding our understanding and vision, we too will become out-of-date. Research tells us that individuals entering the labor market today will be forced to find three to five different career paths during their productive years.

What must we do to become more self-reliant?

A family tradition

My parents established a family tradition in our home which was fun for me in my early years and has become even more meaningful as I reflect back on it as the years have passed. On the first birthday of each child, the family would gather in the living room. In the center of the living room floor, our parents would place articles for the one-year-old child to select. The selection to be made might indicate an interest the child would pursue in life. The articles were the Bible, a child's bottle filled with milk, a toy, and a savings bank filled with coins. The child was placed on one side of the room and the family on the other side. Family members would encourage the child to crawl toward the objects and make a selection. This was all in fun, of course.

I was told that I selected the bank and went into finance as my profession. I watched my brother Ted select the scriptures, and he pursued law as his chosen profession. Over the years he has relied on the scriptures as a basis for his judgments. My youngest brother, Bob, was the well-rounded member of the family. He crawled over, sat down on the Bible, put the bottle of milk in his mouth, and then held the toy in one hand and the bank in the other.

Spiritual nourishment

Now I propose to you that in this entertaining family activity we can find the most fundamental principles of self-reliance. First, the scriptures represent our need for spiritual nourishment. In the scriptures, the Lord reveals His will to His children. From the very beginning of time, He has instructed His prophets to record His communications with them for the benefit of His children. The holy scriptures declare eternal values; they are the firm foundation on which we can build a successful mortal experience. We become more self-reliant when we study the holy scriptures, which teach the principles that provide a divine center to our lives here in mortality.

We should be comforted by the fact that we have the best text which has ever been written or ever will be written as our guide. We can turn to 2 Kings, the fifth chapter, and learn about obedience. We can study the life of Job and learn integrity. King Benjamin's address in Mosiah teaches industry. The life of Joseph, as told in Genesis 39, tells us what we should do when our standard of morality is being tested.

These are just a few examples of the lessons we could learn from the holy scriptures. They are lessons which have stood the test of time. Our challenge is to make them come alive in the hearts and minds of our families as we assume the responsibility to teach them.

Temporal self-reliance

Second, the bottle filled with milk symbolizes the physical body's need for nourishment. Our welfare services program has taught us by using the spokes of a wheel to define the essential elements of temporal self-reliance. The elements contained in the wheel are

education; physical health; employment; home storage; resource management; and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.

This summer my wife and I had the opportunity to visit an eighty-year-old man who certainly demonstrated each of these elements in his life. He was born in a small Idaho town and worked long hours on the farm to finance his education. He spent his professional life teaching English and Spanish in a small high school. To set aside funds for missions and the education of his large family, he grew strawberry and raspberry crops to be picked and sold to the local markets. This labor occupied his summers.

Because these fruits were so labor-intensive, few people had the ambition to grow them. They were much-wanted crops. The demand was always there for as many berries as he could produce. He was never satisfied with the productivity of his crops, so he studied new varieties in an attempt to find the best producers. His backyard was literally an experimental farm for testing the variety of bushes that produced the sweetest and most abundant fruit in his particular climate. His studies yielded increased productivity. The labor kept him in good physical health. The fields of berries furnished automatic employment for his children each summer. The berries delivered to the market could be exchanged not only for cash but also for commodities to be used in their home storage. He managed his resources to build a beautiful home and supply the needs of his family.

This man loved to watch the Lord's system of multiplying and replenishing the earth, which gave him social, emotional, and spiritual strength. Now retired from active teaching, he continues to grow his berries, not for profit but for satisfaction. Six mornings each week during the berry harvest

season, you will see him leading a parade of ten to twelve cars out of the city toward his berry patch. Families come to add to their home storage by picking the berries. I asked him the price per case if we supplied our own labor. He answered: "I don't know. My pay is seeing the look on people's faces as they leave the field holding the fruits of their labors in their arms."

I am convinced there are thousands of ways for families to build self-reliance by working together in productive pursuits. Perhaps a good family home evening discussion could produce some ideas to help make your family unit more temporally self-reliant.

Proper use of resources

Third, the toy I mentioned earlier represents the acquisition of things of the world. We are bombarded today with powerful media to acquire now and pay later in what are purported to be painless monthly installments. We live in an impatient world where everyone wants everything now. The acquisition of worldly goods seems to foster an appetite for more rather than any kind of lasting satisfaction.

Using our resources and worldly goods wisely and extending their life will help us become more self-reliant. I watched a young family move this summer, and I was intrigued by the labels on the boxes coming out of the storage room. They read, "Clothing—Girls—2 years old," "Clothing—Girls—3 years old," and so on up. Clearly, this family had a well-conceived plan to maximize the usage of purchased items of clothing.

We live in a world blessed with so much abundance. Let us be certain that the resources with which we are blessed are never wasted.

Financial well-being

Finally, the fourth item—the bank. It is a symbol of our financial well-being. I learned a great lesson early in my business career. My boss called me into his office. I could tell he had something on his mind. He said, "Give me a definition of interest." Of course, I reached back in my training and gave him a definition I had learned from a textbook. He said, "No, no, no, that's not the one I want. You listen and remember this one: Thems that understands it, earns it; and thens that don't, pays it."

Now it doesn't take a genius to understand that before you can collect interest, you must first have some savings. Having savings while continuing to increase one's standard of living requires understanding of one simple practice and then religiously applying it. After paying your tithing of 10 percent to the Lord, you pay yourself a predetermined amount directly into savings. That leaves you a balance of your income to budget for taxes, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. It is amazing to me that so many people work all of their lives for the grocer, the landlord, the power company, the automobile salesman, and the bank and yet think so little of their own efforts that they pay themselves nothing.

Be prudent, wise, and conservative in your investment programs. It is by consistently and regularly adding to your investments that you will build your emergency and retirement savings. This will add to your progress in becoming self-reliant.

The principle of self-reliance is spiritual as well as temporal. It is not a doomsday program; it is something to be practiced each and every day of our lives. May we continue to hold fast to the eternal truths of self-reliance is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jesus, Savior" without announcement.

President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Twelve, has just provided us a most

timely message, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Jesus, Savior."

Following my remarks the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "How Gentle God's Commands." The benediction will be offered by Elder Clinton L. Cutler of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Jesus loved children

From the book of Matthew we learn that after Jesus and His disciples descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, they paused at Galilee, then came to Capernaum. The disciples said unto Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:1-6).

I think it significant that Jesus loved these little ones who so recently had left the preexistence to come to earth. Children then and children now bless our lives, kindle our love, and prompt our good deeds.

Our sacred opportunity

Is it any wonder that the poet Wordsworth speaks thus of our birth: "Trailing clouds of glory do we come From God, who is our home" (William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood").

Most of these little ones come to parents who eagerly await their arrival, mothers and fathers who rejoice to be a part of that miracle we call birth. No sacrifice is too great, no pain too severe, no waiting too long.

No wonder we are shocked when a wire story originating from a city in America informs that "a newborn girl who was wrapped in a paper bag and dumped in a garbage can is under close observation at a hospital. The child is doing well. 'She's a real beautiful, healthy baby,' a hospital spokesman said Wednesday. Police said the infant was discovered after trash men emptied the garbage can into the back end of their dump truck and saw something move in the debris. Authorities are looking for the mother."

It is our solemn duty, our precious privilege, even our sacred opportunity to welcome to our homes and to our hearts the children who grace our lives.

Our children have three classrooms of learning which are quite distinct one from another. I speak of the

classroom at school, the classroom in church, and the classroom called home.

Classroom at school

The Church has always had a vital interest in public education and encourages its members to participate in parent-teacher activities and other events designed to improve the education of our youth.

There is no more important aspect of public education than the teacher who has the opportunity to love, to teach, and to inspire eager boys and girls and young men and young women. President David O. McKay said: "Teaching is the noblest profession in the world. Upon the proper education of youth depend the permanency and purity of home, the safety and perpetuity of the nation. The parent gives the child an opportunity to live; the teacher enables the child to live well" (*Gospel Ideals* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], p. 436). I trust we shall recognize their importance and their vital mission by providing adequate facilities, the finest of books, and salaries which show our gratitude and our trust.

Each of us remembers with affection the teachers of our youth. I think it amusing that my elementary school music teacher was a Miss Sharp. She had the capacity to infuse within her pupils a love for music and taught us to identify musical instruments and their sounds. I well recall the influence of a Miss Ruth Crow who taught the subject of health. Though these were depression times, she ensured that each sixth-grade student had a dental health chart. She personally checked each pupil for dental health and made certain that through public or private resources, no child went without proper dental care. As Miss Burkhaus, who taught geography, rolled down the maps of the world and with her pointer

marked the capital cities of nations and the distinctive features of each country, language, and culture, little did I anticipate or dream that one day I would visit these lands and peoples.

Oh, the importance in the lives of our children of teachers who lift their spirits, sharpen their intellects, and motivate their very lives!

Classroom at church

The classroom at church adds a vital dimension to the education of every child and youth. In this setting each teacher can provide an upward reach to those who listen to her lessons and feel the influence of her testimony. In Primary, Sunday School, Young Women meetings and those of the Aaronic Priesthood, well-prepared teachers, called under the inspiration of the Lord, can touch each child, each youth, and prompt all to "seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). A word of encouragement here and a spiritual thought there can affect a precious life and leave an indelible imprint upon an immortal soul.

Many years ago, at a Church magazines awards banquet, we sat with President and Sister Harold B. Lee. President Lee said to our teenage daughter Ann: "The Lord has blessed you with a beautiful face and body. Keep the inside just as beautiful as the outside, and you will be blessed with true happiness." This master teacher left with Ann an inspired guide to the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father.

The humble and inspired teacher in the church classroom can instill in her pupils a love for the scriptures. Why, the teacher can bring the Apostles of old and the Savior of the world not only into the classroom but also into the hearts, the minds, the souls of our children.

Classroom of the home

Perhaps most significant of all classrooms is the classroom of the home. It is in the home that we form our attitudes, our deeply held beliefs. It is in the home that hope is fostered or destroyed. Our homes are the laboratories of our lives. What we do there determines the course of our lives when we leave home. Dr. Stuart E. Rosenberg wrote in his book *The Road to Confidence*: "Despite all new inventions and modern designs, fads and fetishes, no one has yet invented, or will ever invent, a satisfying substitute for one's own family."

A happy home is but an earlier heaven. President George Albert Smith asked: "[Do] we want our homes to be happy[?] If we do, let them be the abiding place of prayer, thanksgiving and gratitude" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1944, p. 32).

Handicapped children

There are those situations where children come to mortality with a physical or mental handicap. Try as we will, it is not possible to know why or how such events occur. I salute those parents who without complaint take such a child into their arms and into their lives and provide that added measure of sacrifice and love to one of Heavenly Father's children.

This past summer at Aspen Grove Family Camp, I observed a mother patiently feeding a teenage daughter injured at birth and totally dependent upon Mother. Mother administered each spoonful of food, each swallow of water while holding steady the head and neck of her daughter. Silently I thought to myself, "For seventeen years, Mother has provided this service and all others to her daughter, never thinking of her own comfort, her own pleasure, her own food." May God

bless such mothers, such fathers, such children. And He will.

Powerful emotions

Parents everywhere realize that the most powerful combination of emotions in the world is not called out by any grand cosmic event, nor is it found in novels or history books, but merely by a parent gazing down upon a sleeping child.

When doing so, the truth of the words of Charles M. Dickinson come to mind:

They are idols of hearts and of households;
They are angels of God in disguise;
The sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
His glory still gleams in their eyes;
These truants from home and from Heaven,
They have made me more manly and mild;
And I know now how Jesus could liken
The kingdom of God to a child.
["The Children"]

Tiny Tim

In our daily experiences with children, we discover they are most perceptive and often utter profound truths. Charles Dickens, the author of the classic *A Christmas Carol*, illustrated this fact when he described the humble Bob Cratchit family assembling for a rather meager but long-anticipated Christmas dinner. Bob, the father, was returning home with his frail son Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Tiny Tim "bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame." Bob's wife asked of him, "'And how did little Tim behave?' . . .

"'As good as gold,' said Bob, 'and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful,

sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see" (*Christmas Carol and Cricket on the Hearth* [New York: Grosset and Dunlap, n.d.], pp. 50–51).

Charles Dickens himself said, "I love these little people, and it is not a slight thing when they who are so fresh from God love us."

Gifts from children

Children express their love in original and innovative ways. On my birthday a few weeks ago, a precious little girl presented me with her handwritten birthday card and enclosed in the envelope a tiny toy padlock which she liked and thought I would enjoy receiving as a gift.

"Of all the dear sights in the world, nothing is so beautiful as a child when it is giving something. Any small thing it gives. A child gives the world to you. It opens the world to you as if it were a book you'd never been able to read. But when a gift must be found, it is always some absurd little thing, pasted on crooked, . . . an angel looking like a clown. A child has so little that it can give, because it never knows it has given you everything" (Margaret Lee Runbeck, *Bits & Pieces*, 20 Sept. 1990).

Such was Jenny's gift to me.

Barry Bonnell and Ricky

Children seem to be endowed with abiding faith in their Heavenly Father and His capacity and desire to answer their sweet prayers. It has been my personal experience that when a child prays, God listens.

Let me share with you the experience of Barry Bonnell and Dale Mur-

phy, well-known professional baseball players formerly with the Atlanta Braves baseball club. Each is a convert to the Church, Dale Murphy having been baptized by Barry Bonnell.

"An experience occurred during the 1978 season that Barry described as 'life changing.' He was struggling terribly, batting about .200. Because of his poor performance, he was down on himself and felt miserable. He really didn't want to go when Dale Murphy asked him to come along to the hospital, but he went anyway. There he met Ricky Little, a stalwart [Atlanta] Braves' supporter, but a youngster afflicted with leukemia.

"It was readily apparent that Ricky was near death. Barry felt a deep desire to think of something comforting to say but nothing seemed adequate. Finally, he asked if there was anything they could do. The youngster hesitated, and then asked if they would each hit a home run for him during the next game. Barry said [later], 'That request wasn't such a hard thing for Dale, who in fact hit two homers that night, but I was struggling at the plate and hadn't hit a homer all year. Then I felt a warm feeling come over me and I told Ricky to count on it.' " That night, Barry hit his only home run of the season. (Jim Ison, *Mormons in the Major Leagues* [Cincinnati: Action Sports, 1991], p. 21). A child's prayer had been answered; a child's wish had been fulfilled.

Abuse of children

If only all children had loving parents, safe homes, and caring friends, what a wonderful world would be theirs. Unfortunately, all children are not so bounteously blessed. Some children witness their fathers savagely beating their mothers, while others are on the receiving end of such abuse. What cowardice, what depravity, what shame!

Local hospitals everywhere receive these little ones, bruised and battered, accompanied by bald-faced lies that the child “ran into the door” or “fell down the stairs.” Liars, bullies who abuse children, they will one day reap the whirlwind of their foul deeds. The quiet, the hurt, the offended child victim of abuse and at times incest must receive help.

A district judge, in a letter to me, declared: “Sexual abuse of children is one of the most depraved, destructive, and demoralizing crimes in civilized society. There is an alarming increase of reported physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of children. Our courts are becoming inundated with this repulsive behavior.”

The Church does not condone such heinous and vile conduct. Rather, we condemn in the harshest of terms such treatment of God’s precious children. Let the child be rescued, nurtured, loved, and healed. Let the offender be brought to justice, to accountability for his actions and receive professional treatment to curtail such wicked and devilish conduct. When you and I know of such conduct and fail to take action to eradicate it, we become part of the problem. We share part of the guilt. We experience part of the punishment.

Blessing of the Nephite children

I trust I have not spoken too harshly, but I love these little ones and know that the Lord loves them too. No more touching account of this love can be found than the experience of Jesus blessing the children as described in 3 Nephi. It tells of Jesus healing the sick, teaching the people, and praying to Heavenly Father for them. But then let me quote the precious words:

“[Jesus] took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; . . . and the angels did minister unto them” (3 Nephi 17:21–24).

Modern-day miracle

You may ask, “Do such things occur even today?” Let me share with you the beautiful account of a grandmother and a grandfather now serving a mission and the manner in which their little grandson was blessed. The missionary grandfather wrote:

“My wife, Deanna, and I are now serving a mission in Jackson, Ohio. One of our big concerns as we accepted a mission call was our family. We would not be there when they had problems.

“Just before we went on our mission, our grandson R. J., who was two-and-a-half years old, had to have surgery to correct a crossed eye. His mother asked me to go with them because R. J. and I are real buddies. The operation went well, but R. J. did cry before and after the surgery because none of the family could go into the operating room, and he was afraid.

“About six months later, while we were still on our mission, R. J. needed the other eye corrected. His mother phoned and expressed her desire for me to be there to go with them for the second operation. Of course, distance and the mission prevented me from being with him. Deanna and I fasted and prayed for the Lord to comfort our grandson during his operation.

“We called shortly after the surgery was over and found that R. J. had

remembered the previous experience and did not want to leave his parents. But as soon as he entered the operating room, he quieted down. He lay down on the operating table, took off his glasses for them, and went through the operation with a calm spirit. We were very thankful; our prayers had been answered.

"A couple of days later, we called our daughter and asked about R. J. He was doing fine, and she related this incident to us: In the afternoon after the operation, R. J. awakened and told his mother that Grandpa was there during the operation. He said, 'Grandpa was there and made it all right.' You see, the Lord made the anesthesiologist appear to that little boy as though he were his grandpa, but his grandpa and grandma were on a mission 1,800 miles away."

Grandpa may not have been by your bedside, R. J., but you were in his prayers and in his thoughts. You were cradled in the hand of the Lord and blessed by the Father of us all.

My dear brothers and sisters, may the laughter of children gladden our hearts. May the faith of children soothe our souls. May the love of children prompt our deeds. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). May our Heavenly Father ever bless these sweet souls, these special friends of the Master, is my humble and earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

Elder Clinton L. Cutler offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1991. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson was with us this morning. We regret that he is not with us this afternoon. He is watching this session in his apartment.

Elders James E. Faust, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, and F. Melvin Hammond are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir will furnish the music for this session. They will be directed by Donald Ripplinger and accompanied by Richard Elliott. May I say that Brother Robert Cundick accompanied the choir this morning as

they rendered beautiful music for us. That is the last session of conference that Brother Cundick is likely to accompany. He is retiring after nearly twenty-seven years of very faithful and devoted service. He is a great organist, a tremendous professional, and, above all, a man who loves the Lord and the Lord's work, with a heart for rendering service wherever he can be of use. We wish Brother and Sister Cundick every good thing in the future.

The choir will begin this service by singing "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue," and the invocation will then be offered by Bishop Glenn L. Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir sang "With All the Power of Heart and Tongue."

Bishop Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor." Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Feeble knees means fearful

There is a phrase used four times in the standard works which has always intrigued me. It is the expression "feeble knees."

By definition, *feeble* means weak, not strong, without force, easily broken, frail.

When Frederick G. Williams was called to be a Counselor to Joseph Smith, he was given this charge: "Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Coupled with the word *strengthen*, which is to make or become stronger, the phrase led me to contemplate the meaning of these words.

Early on, I assumed "feeble knees" meant weak or exhausted. However, the context of its use in Isaiah (see Isaiah 35:3-4) suggests that it may have a somewhat richer mean-

ing, something more like fearful. I actually favor this latter interpretation. Today we often hear such expressions as "weak in the knees" or "knocking knees" to denote fear.

In Doctrine and Covenants 81:5, the verse might be interpreted as the Lord's urging Frederick G. Williams to provide strength to the weak ("succor the weak"), to provide encouragement to those who are exhausted or discouraged ("lift up the hands which hang down"), and to give courage and strength to those with feeble knees and fearful hearts.

In March of 1832 when this section was revealed, Church members had reason to be fearful. In Hiram, Ohio, where the Prophet Joseph Smith was living, there was a rising tide of hostility against the Saints. Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were brutally attacked by a mob of fifty men.

Those who would destroy at the present time no longer use tar and feathers; they taunt and fault.

Strengthen feeble knees

Today, almost 160 years later, there is no doubt in my mind that the admonition to strengthen feeble knees is more apropos than ever.

Who among us has not experienced feeble knees or fear and uncertainty over the responsibilities we encounter in this mortal existence?

What of the father, for example, who works long hours to provide for his family only to find at the end of each month that his income only barely meets his expenses? Is he likely to experience the fear that an unforeseen expense might upset his family's delicately balanced, already strained budget? Does he ever fear that he might not be able to adequately provide for his family's necessities?

And what of the parents who find themselves rearing an unhappy and nonconforming child? Do they ever experience doubt and fear that they might not be providing the right counsel, discipline, and rules? Do they ever fear they might not be able to provide enough unconditional love to their child? Do they ever fear that the child may be lost eternally because of their parenting?

What of the single parent who is rearing children by himself or herself? Does that parent ever fear that he or she will be overwhelmed by the myriad responsibilities, particularly since these challenges must be met alone?

It would seem that no one escapes some uncertainty, insecurity, doubt, and even fear. This mortal existence is invariably challenging and unpredictable. An honest person who is acquainted with the characteristics of life cannot ever be completely confident that his circumstances will not change unexpectedly.

How do we deal with the inevitable moments of fear or feeble knees? It is vital that we not face them alone.

Always it is helpful and comforting to be able to confide in a loving and trusted friend or relative who empathetically listens to our uncertainties. We often find that our confidant has experienced similar fears, and we may even share in his wise counsel.

Life is never easy, and we cannot escape our own case of feeble knees from time to time. It is thus essential that we love and support one another.

As we look for ways to strengthen friends and loved ones who may have feeble knees, it would be well to examine ourselves. Do we have feeble knees, wherein by word and action we can weaken ourselves and our associates?

Let me share a few of today's subtle trends and enticements that can cause our knees to become feeble. None of these is going to cause apostasy by itself, but as the conduct continues, our knees may lose the strength we need to face the realities and fears of life.

Avoid personal interpretations

In Doctrine and Covenants 11:22, we read, "Study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men." Nowhere are we advised to dilute the doctrines of the gospel with personal amendments. Our view is limited, and our personal strength is dependent on understanding and following His word.

Some of us may be inclined to study the word with the idea in mind that we must add much where the Lord has said little! Those who would "add upon" could well be guided by the anchor question: Do my writings, comments, or observations build faith and strengthen testimonies? Oftentimes we can cause confusion and misdirection in our lives and in the lives of others if we promote the startling and unorthodox. Feeble knees are strengthened by

those who lead with purpose rather than with personal interpretations.

Observe the Sabbath

Some today are losing the reinforcement that comes from observing the Sabbath. They say: "Sunday is my day off. I will do as I please. I can worship without having the day structured for meeting attendance or meaningful family and neighbor relationships."

Sometimes the freedoms and blessings of the Sabbath can be lost by attitudes that allow selfishness and lack of personal involvement in tried-and-true patterns. Sabbath days can be lost an hour at a time. Sabbath days can be lost an outing at a time.

Avoid contention

Controversy and contention are other weakening habits. If Satan can succeed in creating in us the pastime of arguing, quarreling, and contention, it is easier for him to bind us with heavier sins which can destroy our eternal lives. Anger is a poor substitute for self-mastery and compassionate service.

Be honest

In recent days all of us have witnessed many who have weakened themselves even to the point of falling completely as they have sacrificed the leading principles of honesty and integrity in order to climb an artificial ladder of accomplishment. No lasting great personal heights are ever reached by those who step on others to try to push themselves upward.

It is not surprising to learn that people who tell white lies soon become color-blind.

Despite the endless examples of scandals in business, religion, and government, honesty and integrity are still the ingredients to strengthen knees.

Work hard

A coach of the East St. Louis, Illinois, High School took a group of young men and turned them into champions. A St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* sports editor wrote:

"This is a story Hollywood wouldn't believe: kids growing up in America's biggest urban disaster, slugging it out, year after year. No money, no fancy facilities, just a coach who still believes pride and hard work can mean something."

The coach told his players, "Life isn't always fair, but we can still expect excellence from ourselves."

He insisted on hard work from all of his players, the stars included. His team won more than many championships. (See Eugene H. Methrin, "The Stuff of Champions," *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1991, p. 83.)

On our last trip to Great Britain, I had a chance to visit with an eighteen-year-old young man who has had close association with many missionaries in the field. As I was going to speak to a large number of missionaries in the next few days, I asked this friend what he thought was the most important trait missionaries needed in order to be successful. His answer was simple. "They must know how to work. Many come on a mission never knowing how to work." It has been my experience over the years that feeble knees are not a by-product of work and commitment to goals.

As this eighteen-year-old has observed, we can strengthen feeble knees of others and ourselves by going to work.

Many of us today have a tendency to seek instant strength, instant pleasure, instant acceptance, instant relief, instant answers, instant change, instant success, instant knowledge, instant wealth, omitting day-by-day effort and work. We become discouraged and get more feeble kneed if goals are not reached immediately. Work is a necessary pattern in the solid life.

Avoid criticizing others

Often we hear, "Be a light, not a judge." Yet we assume the right to point out flaws in others or dwell on our own weaknesses. Constant criticism can wear one down and weaken knees. As we look closely at family members, friends, and leaders, we will see their human limitations.

An old fable, and one of my favorites over the years, tells this story:

A Japanese scholar each evening talked with workmen from a factory. One night he told the men that he would bring them something of beauty on the morrow. One man asked the scholar to bring him a rose, another asked for a branch, and the third requested a lily. The next evening he handed out the rose, the branch, and the lily.

"There is a thorn on my rose," said the first man. The second complained, "There is a dead leaf on my branch." "There is a clump of dirt on my lily," cried the third.

The scholar took all his gifts back and said, "You had a beautiful rose and saw only the thorn; you had a lovely green branch and saw only the dead leaf; and on the glorious lily you saw only the clump of dirt."

In each of us there may be a thorn in our character, a dead leaf clinging to our reputation, or a bit of dirt in our past. If we dwell on past mistakes, we will certainly become weak kneed and fearful.

When we point out faults or mistakes others may have made, in no way will we strengthen their feeble knees or hold up hands that hang down.

William James wrote, "The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook" (*The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. [New York: Dover Publications, 1950], 2:369).

Joseph Smith said, "I told them I was but a man, and they must not expect me to be perfect; if they expected perfection from me, I should expect

it from them; but if they would bear with my infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, I would likewise bear with their infirmities" (*History of the Church*, 5:181).

How far we have come since the accepted adage for children was "spare the rod and spoil the child." Now both in business and in the home, we are encouraged to catch people doing something good and then give honest praise.

We strengthen and build by pointing out the good traits of a person and cause fear and weakness by being unduly critical.

I am in agreement that tact is rubbing out another's mistakes instead of rubbing them in.

A scripture says it this way:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).

God's work will go forward

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*History of the Church*, 4:540).

With this kind of declaration from a prophet of God, whose knees need to remain feeble?

May God help us to strengthen the feeble knees of ourselves and those about us by daily improvement in our attitudes and examples, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Joy and misery

One of the greatest of all God's revelations is Father Lehi's teaching that "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). Joy is more than happiness. Joy is the ultimate sensation of well-being. It comes from being complete and in harmony with our Creator and his eternal laws.

The opposite of joy is misery. Misery is more than unhappiness, sorrow, or suffering. Misery is the ultimate state of disharmony with God and his laws.

Joy and misery are eternal emotions whose ultimate extent we are not likely to experience in mortality. In this life we have some mortal simulations, which we call happiness or pleasure and unhappiness or pain. In the midst of these emotions is suffering. Some suffering comes from our own sins or those of others, but much suffering is simply an inevitable part of the mortal condition, like an accidental injury.

Experience of Joshua Dennis

An example of our two emotional extremes occurred two years ago. As part of an outing, a group of Latter-day Saint Boy Scouts entered an abandoned mine in the mountains not far from here. Somehow, young Joshua Dennis was separated from the group and became lost in the mine. Anyone who has ever lost something valuable will remember that terrible feeling. The pain is most extreme when we have lost a loved one. Joshua's family

and friends feared their loss might be permanent.

Search efforts were organized. For days, many good people dropped everything they were doing to search for the one who was lost. Many shared the pain of his loss. Then, miraculously, he was found. Prayers were answered, and the mercy of a loving Heavenly Father was manifest in the happiness of family and friends reunited with the one who was lost. The pain of loss turned to the overwhelming joy of reunion. (See "Hidden Treasure," *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, pp. 30-35.)

Few experiences illustrate mortal feelings of joy better than the recovery of something precious we fear we have lost. The scriptures illustrate this experience. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd invited his friends to rejoice with him, for he had "found [his] sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). "Likewise," Jesus explained, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:7). In another parable, a father rejoiced in the return of a prodigal son, explaining, "For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

Misery comes from losses

These experiences are symbolic of our eternal journey. The Fall has separated us from our heavenly home. We must choose which way we will go. Satan, who was separated from God and permanently lost, would like to see our

separation become permanent also. Father Lehi taught that Satan's purpose is to make men miserable. "Because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, [Satan] sought also the misery of all mankind" (2 Nephi 2:18; see also 2:27). Those who yield to his enticings are on the way to the same miserable destiny as he. Shut out from the presence of God, they will be in "a state of misery and endless torment" (Mosiah 3:25; see also 2 Nephi 2:5). As the Lord said about the wicked, "misery shall be their doom" (Moses 7:37).

Much of the misery experienced by Satan comes from losses. Satan experienced that kind of misery when he lost his first estate. Now he tries to inflict similar losses on those who have proceeded to mortality, the second estate. Satan encourages a loss of virtue, a loss of integrity, a loss of reputation, a loss of ideals, a loss of wholesome associations, and even a loss of life.

Joy comes from wholeness

In contrast, our Heavenly Father created us to resist and to overcome such losses, to be whole, to have joy. He wants us to return to him, and he has provided a way for that reunion to be achieved. No wonder we say that his gospel is "a voice of mercy from heaven; . . . a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy" (D&C 128:19).

Our Creator wants us to be happy in this life. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 255). The things of the earth were created for our happiness. Modern revelation tells us that "all things which come of the earth . . . are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart" (D&C 59:18).

Even on the Sabbath, a day of worship, the Lord expects us to have "a glad heart and a cheerful countenance" (D&C 59:15). A prophet has called the gospel plan "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8).

How do we seek joy?

How do we seek happiness or joy? King Benjamin invited his people to consider "the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold," he said, "they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven . . . [to] dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

Father Lehi explained that if Adam and Eve had not gone through the process we call the Fall, they would have remained forever in their initial state of innocence, "having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin" (2 Nephi 2:23).

Our first parents recognized this principle. When the Holy Ghost fell upon them and bore record of the Father and the Son, Adam blessed the name of the Lord, declaring that "because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy" (Moses 5:10). With inspired insight, Eve explained the purpose of life and the source of joy:

"Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient" (Moses 5:11).

When I think of happiness or joy in this life, I begin with some experiences that are simple and basic. I see the expression on the face of a one-year-old taking those first steps. I remember a two-year-old immersed in a soft ice-cream cone. I think of a child loving a puppy or a kitten.

If the more mature have not dulled their physical or spiritual sensitivities by excess or disuse, they can also experience joy in what is simple and basic—in flowers and other growing things, in a sunrise or sunset or other beauties of nature, in wholesome companionship.

Another source of happiness and mortal joy is the accomplishment of worthy goals, simple things like physical exercise or more complex goals like the completion of an arduous task.

Other goals have eternal significance. Their completion produces joy in this life and the promise of eternal joy in the world to come. A few weeks ago Elder Rex D. Pinegar and I saw an example of this as we visited the beautifully renovated temple in Cardston, Alberta. In the brides' room stood a lovely young woman in her wedding dress. She was there because she had made righteous choices. The look in her eyes and the expression on her face were a perfect embodiment of joy.

Fulness of joy

But despite all we can do, we cannot have a fulness of joy in this world or through our own efforts (see D&C 101:36). Only in Christ can our joy be full. This is why the angel proclaimed: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11).

We are able to have a fulness of joy only when spirit and body are inseparably connected in the glorious resurrection to celestial glory (see D&C 93:33; 76:50–70). That joy, of course, comes only through the mercy of the Holy Messiah, whose resurrection broke the bands of death and whose atonement unlocks the reservoir of mercy by which we can be cleansed of our sins and come into the presence

of God to receive the fulness of the Father.

We joyously proclaim that "there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8). God's mercy is the only source of the ultimate and eternal joy, which restores every loss, dries every tear, and erases every pain. Eternal joy transcends all suffering. In this life and in the life to come, that joy comes about through the Resurrection and the remission of sins.

Remembering his early life, Alma told how his sins caused him to be "tormented with the pains of hell" (Alma 36:13). He said he was "racked, even with the pains of a damned soul" (Alma 36:16). At length he remembered his father's teachings about the Savior, who would atone for the sins of the world. He cried out, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me" (Alma 36:18).

The miracle of forgiveness was wrought in his life, and the bitter pain of sin was replaced by the sweet joy of redemption. In his words, "Oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:20).

Alma learned the eternal truth that the pain and misery that come from sin can only be erased by repentance. Physical pain ends with death. Spiritual pain, or misery, is everlasting, unless we repent.

The Book of Mormon tells of an entire people who received a remission of their sins and "were filled with joy" and "peace of conscience" (Mosiah 4:3). King Benjamin reminded them that they had "received a remission of [their] sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in [their] souls" (Mosiah 4:11).

The joy that follows the remission of sins comes from the Spirit of the

Lord (see Mosiah 4:3, 20). It is a fulfillment of the Lord's promise that "I will impart unto you of my Spirit, . . . which shall fill your soul with joy" (D&C 11:13). As the Apostle Paul taught, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Galatians 5:22). It comes in the same way to everyone—to rich and poor, to the prominent and the obscure. In conferring his greatest gift of mercy through the Atonement, God is not a respecter of persons.

Wickedness never was happiness

In contrast, those who yield to the enticing of Satan may, as the scripture says, "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25), but that kind of pleasure can never lead to lasting happiness or eternal joy. The spirit and influence of Satan bring feelings of confusion, contention, darkness, disorder, anger, hate, and misery.

Persons who pursue Satan's way are certain to have Satan's misery. Unless they repent they will "remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself" (2 Nephi 9:9). As Alma said to his wayward son, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Our personal experiences and almost every newscast and newspaper remind us of the unhappiness and pain suffered on this earth. Some of this is traceable to sin. Many letters sent to Church headquarters describe the pain people inflict upon one another, often within those family relationships that should be the source of life's greatest joy.

We have seen the pain of parents when their children stray from the path of truth. We have seen the pain that comes when a wife abandons her family and flies off to seek pleasure in forbidden paths, like a moth to a flame. We have seen the pain that comes in those more numerous instances when a husband abandons his wife and chil-

dren in his self-destructive search for pleasure.

Other unhappiness results from the lust for power and wealth. A few weeks ago some of my Brethren and I visited a country that had been ruled for decades by an oppressive dictatorship, recently overthrown. We saw the conditions produced by rulers who had gratified their lusts at the expense of their people. Their palaces stood in shameful contrast to the workers' apartment houses built without indoor plumbing. Everywhere we saw the ugly effects of the neglect of public services. Truly, the Proverbs say, "When the wicked . . . rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

The consequences of wickedness are far-reaching. They continue from generation to generation. The pitiful victims of physical and sexual and emotional abuse are more susceptible to Satan's manipulations. They are more likely to perpetuate these ugly transgressions within their own family relationships. Like highly contagious physical ailments, the spiritual diseases of lust and greed and corruption spread their evil effects, and Satan rejoices in the unhappiness and pain they cause in each succeeding generation.

Brothers and sisters, old and young, I plead with each of you to remember that wickedness never was happiness and that sin leads to misery. Young people, do not seek happiness in the glittering but shallow things of the world. We cannot achieve lasting happiness by pursuing the wrong things. Someone once said, "You can never get enough of what you don't need because what you don't need won't satisfy you."

Young and old, turn your eyes and your hearts away from the deceptive messages of the media. There is no happiness in alcohol or drugs, only enslavement. There is no happiness in violence, only pain and sorrow. There

is no happiness in sexual relations and physical familiarities outside the bonds of marriage, only degradation and increased momentum along the way to spiritual death.

There is no lasting happiness in what we possess. Happiness and joy come from what a person *is*, not from what he or she *possesses* or *appears to be*. Youth, hold fast to your standards. Study and use that saving pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*.

Righteousness fosters righteousness

Righteousness fosters righteousness. The effects of righteous examples are felt for generations to come. Good parenting produces youth who make good parents. Just as many of us have been strengthened by the noble examples of our pioneering ancestors in many lands, so the righteous choices and sacrifices of our day can bless our families and our friends and our nations for all the years to come.

We appreciate the work of our *Church News* and our Church maga-

zines, which share worthy and wholesome examples for the strengthening of all. We are saddened by the negative examples highlighted in the media and in many other public communications. Examples are powerful. We should use them to build up, not to tear down.

I testify to you of the lasting happiness and ultimate joy of those who exercise faith in God and keep his commandments. I urge each of you to seek the joy that comes from keeping the commandments of God and exerting a righteous influence for the benefit of those we love.

I testify to the truth of God's promise that the faithful "shall enter into the joy of [the] Lord, and shall inherit eternal life" (D&C 51:19). I testify of God the Eternal Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the authors of the great plan of happiness and mercy. I pray that we may do those things that are required for happiness and peace in this life and for joy and eternal life in the world to come, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Aileen H. Clyde

What is charity?

One of the great blessings of my childhood was that my mother spent significant time reading to me and my younger brother Howard. She had a great sense of the importance of good books, and she used them to teach and entertain us. This all served to expand our limited young lives to matters far beyond our daily experience. The reading had begun when I was a runabout preschooler and Howard, who had been born with severe physical disabilities and could not run about, needed special attention. The blessing for me was that I got special attention too.

The books were wide-ranging and grew in sophistication as we grew. I re-

member nursery rhymes, poetry, folktales from Russia, the adventure in *Thunder Cave*—and the scriptures. Together we read parables, incidents such as the woman at the well, even the great abstractions.

One day Mother read:

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. . . .

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8; see also Moroni 7:45–46).

Howard interrupted the reading, as he often did, with a question: "What

is charity?" He wanted to know the meaning of what we had just heard; I was still caught up in the way it sounded. I only wanted to go on with the reading, but I could tell Mother was pleased with his inquisitiveness. She taught us then and later that good questions can be important if we are truly searching to understand and that sometimes good answers that are good enough may take a lifetime of looking. Then she put down the New Testament and read from the Book of Mormon:

"But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him [or her]" (Moroni 7:47).

There it was in one verse—the concentrated essence of a much larger whole, a definition given for a profound yet available truth. What I heard that day was clearly beyond my childhood comprehension, but the spirit of love was there and was as real as any of the other details of my young life.

Who is my neighbor?

The scriptures give us examples of other questioners whose queries taught them new ways to think about love. In the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, Christ was asked by a Pharisee who wanted to trick him, what was the *greatest* commandment. Christ answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

In Luke's record, the lawyer who had asked the question wanted to know more. Perhaps he feared he might waste his love, so he asked, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). And Christ gave the parable of the good Samaritan as an answer. The Samaritan saw what others with eyes had walked by without

seeing. He did what he *could* do that no one else *would* do, and he dignified himself and put us all in awe of him because we didn't expect the Samaritan to be our neighbor. (See Luke 10:30–37.) We wouldn't tempt Christ by asking him whom we should love or serve, but I think occasionally we wonder if we really know.

It is interesting to me that Jesus chose a Samaritan as an example of love unfeigned for the Pharisees. They were so remarkable for their observance of the letter of the law that this teaching must have caused at least some of them to see in new ways and with new spirit the freedom to love that Christ was offering them. That is the challenge for us—to allow Christ's teachings, magnified by the Holy Spirit, to guide us to *his* ways of seeing and being.

Understanding charity is not easy

Now, understanding charity or being charitable is not easy. And our scriptures have not indicated that it would be. Even "charity suffereth long" requires our thoughtful interpretation. The suffering that may come from loving is the result of our great caring. It comes because another matters to us so much.

To avoid that kind of suffering, we would have to avoid what gives us life and hope and joy—our capacity to love deeply. As an antidote against the suffering that will surely come as we have loved ones die, or see them struggle or be misled, or have them misunderstand us or even betray us, we can find relief in charity to others. We accepted bearing one another's burdens and mourning with those who mourn as we accepted Christ in our baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–9). His spirit and power will comfort us as we extend ourselves in help and love to those who need us.

If charity is not always quick to our understanding, it may occasionally be quick to our misunderstanding. It is not charity or kindness to endure any type of abuse or unrighteousness that may be inflicted on us by others. God's commandment that as we love him we must respect ourselves suggests we must not accept disrespect from others. It is not charity to let another repeatedly deny our divine nature and agency. It is not charity to bow down in despair and helplessness. That kind of suffering should be ended, and that is very difficult to do alone. There are priesthood leaders and other loving servants who will give aid and strength when they *know* of the need. We must be willing to let others help us.

Examples of charity

A striking feature of the effect of a deepened understanding of Christ's love is how such comprehension dignifies and lifts the individual to action. Julia Mavimbela, a Church member in Soweto, South Africa, tells how her conversion brought her from bitterness at her life's circumstances to faith and strength to help those around her and beyond her. She taught gardening to relieve hunger, and she organized women for peace to calm their strife-torn country.

In Thailand in the late 1970s, Sister Srilaxana worked as a translator of the scriptures five days a week and then traveled throughout her country at her own expense each weekend, visiting fledgling Relief Societies. These followers of Christ did what it was in their souls to do to serve God's children. They did what their individuality permitted, and their examples invite us to do the same.

Relief Society's mission

Charitable, compassionate service is the central mission of our Church's

Relief Society organization. We are now nearly three million members worldwide, and we rejoice in our great, diversified sisterhood. We know that our society, which marks its 150th anniversary next year, has accomplished much good. We have learned that we can do *many* things together that would be impossible if we worked alone. But our major focus as a society is to bless the individual woman as she grows in her knowledge of Christ's gospel and reflects her knowledge by the choices she makes to serve others in righteousness.

At last October's conference, Bishop Glenn L. Pace admonished all of us to look around us to do what we could as individuals to relieve pain or loneliness or injustice in our own communities. He promised that if we did a compassion would enter our hearts, and through the Holy Ghost sanctification could take place within our souls and we would become more like our Savior (see Conference Report, Oct. 1990, pp. 7-10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, pp. 8-10).

I pray in all humility that our faith in God may move us to such action and that we may thus know by the Holy Spirit the meaning of charity so that we can exercise it in our lives, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Clyde of the Relief Society General Presidency. She was preceded by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now stand and sing together "O Ye Mountains High."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons, who was released yesterday after serving more than five years as a member of the Seventy, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "O Ye Mountains High."

Elder Francis M. Gibbons

As one door closes and another opens in my life, I am grateful, my brothers and sisters, to be with you here this afternoon in this historic building from whose pulpit all of the prophets of the restored Church save Joseph Smith only have spoken and borne testimony. I could ask for nothing better than to pray that the Spirit which actuated them will be with me as I speak briefly this afternoon.

Foundation of prayer

The foundations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are anchored in prayer. It was, for instance, the fervent prayer of Joseph Smith that opened the door to the restoration of the gospel. The foundational scripture in the first chapter of James which prompted Joseph to go to the grove to pray clearly defines the conditions under which God will respond to his children. There it is written that we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). The scripture then adds this postscript: "For let not that man"—that is, the man that wavers—"think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:7).

Beyond this seminal scripture, which contains the key to unlock the treasure house to God's knowledge and wisdom, there are others which further define the principle of prayer and its application in our lives. For example, it is written in Alma 34:27: "Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you." Thus, when we are not actually engaged in the formal act of prayer, we should al-

ways have a prayer in our heart, wherever we are or whatever we are doing.

Secret prayer

Another key scripture on prayer, which goes beyond admonition to the realm of command, is found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 19, which reads: "And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private" (19:28).

We may ask, "Why has God seen fit to make it a command that we pray both vocally and in secret?"

Obviously, secret prayer is necessary in many cases where it is awkward or infeasible to pray vocally. So, if we are in a social or a business setting and need comfort or direction, a resort to secret prayer is often our only alternative.

But a more significant reason for praying secretly is found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 6, where it is written: "Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart" (6:16).

Other scriptures broaden this concept to include not only God, but those whom God inspires. So Zeezrom, the crafty lawyer who was taught by Alma and Amulek, became "convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy" (Alma 12:7).

It is clear then that Satan and his followers, who have been cast out of God's presence and are dead to His Spirit, are excluded from those who, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, may know the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. So, in his wisdom and

mercy, God has provided a channel of communication between him and his children on earth that Satan, our common enemy, cannot invade. This is the channel of secret prayer. The significance of this to the Latter-day Saint is profound, for by this means we are able to communicate with our Heavenly Father in secrecy, confident that the adversary cannot intrude.

Several years ago, a young man who was in love with a beautiful girl sought my counsel. He was reluctant to marry her because her parents had fallen into apostasy. He said the girl's mother had told him she knew the Church was false. When he asked how she knew that, she said a voice once whispered to her to go into a nearby bookstore. She did so and there found a bitter anti-Mormon book from whose reading she concluded that the Church was false. Had this sister understood the gospel, she should have prayed in secret, relating her experience and asking God to reveal whether her conclusion was correct, in the manner prescribed in the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 9:8-9).

David Whitmer reported that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "some revelations are of God; some revelations are of man; and some revelations are of the devil" (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:163). But while Satan can convey thoughts, he does not know whether these thoughts have taken root unless they are reflected either in words or in actions.

Be wise in word and action

All this suggests that we should be wise in what we say and do. We should also be wise in the way we guard precious things that are revealed to us through the Spirit. For example, when

President Heber J. Grant was a young man presiding in the Tooele Stake, Patriarch John Rowberry gave him a special blessing. Afterward, the patriarch said to President Grant, "I saw something that I dared not mention." President Grant later recorded it was made known to him at that moment that he would one day be the President of the Church. He never discussed this revelation with anyone, never recorded it, and revealed it only after it was an accomplished fact. (See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], p. viii.) How wise he was, for had he revealed it to others, his enemy Satan would have known and with that knowledge could have created unimaginable difficulties for him.

Often, we talk too much. We say things that need not be said or should not be said, for in saying them, we may open a crevice which enables Lucifer to wedge his way into our lives. We learn from 2 Nephi that Satan "seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Satan and his followers are persistent in their quest to drag us down to their level. They will use any device or artifice to accomplish their end. If they know, for example, of revelations such as the one given to President Grant or if they see from our words or actions evidence of animosity or hatred or discord among us, they may capitalize on them in ways which will be detrimental to us. Wisdom suggests, therefore, that we suppress words and actions which might enable Satan to harm us or whose tendency might be to create discord or enmity.

For many years, we knew and admired a couple who on the face of it seemed happy and well-adjusted. It came as a surprise when it was learned that their relationship was filled with

discord and bitterness caused by almost constant bickering and faultfinding between them. By this means, the couple had eroded away the bonds of love which originally bound them together and in the process had shattered each other's self-esteem and had opened the door for Satan to enter.

How much better it is to follow the admonitions of the Savior, to speak with kindness and love and to create in our homes havens from the turmoil of the world, which is constantly stirred up by the intrigue of our common enemy. And how much better it is to emphasize and to focus on positive

rather than negative things so as to build up and to protect each other and to minimize the opportunity for the intrusion of satanic influences in our lives, which I pray we may all do in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Francis M. Gibbons.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Gardner H. Russell, who also were released yesterday after completing more than five years as General Authorities.

Elder H. Verlan Andersen

Righteous Nephite society

This conference brings to an end one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences my sweet companion and I have ever shared together and for which I desire to express my most profound gratitude. Most of our time was spent among the wonderful people of Latin America, whom we came to love so deeply, and I desire to make reference to a miracle which occurred among their ancestors many years ago which seems to be one of the greatest events in the history of the world. It was the miracle Christ wrought in transforming their societies from much sin and suffering to total righteousness and happiness.

It will be remembered that for six hundred years prior to the advent of the Savior, the Nephite and Lamanite races had been almost constantly at war one with another. Although there were periods of peace and prosperity, upon becoming wealthy the people became proud and wicked, were punished, and the process would start again (see Helaman 12:1-4). These cycles of human folly were relatively short and seemed to occur every five or ten years.

However, when the Lord appeared, he established one unified society in which there was no sin, no crime, and no wars. These conditions continued to prevail in some areas for around three hundred years. The record describes the affairs of the people thus:

"And . . . there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

"And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:15-16).

Importance of parental teaching

What would one not give to live in a society like that? As we know, the people eventually returned to their evil ways, and the Nephites became so proud and wicked they had to be destroyed. But how were those races able to live as a celestial society for so long? We might also ask, "How will it be possible during the Millennium for the people to remain righteous for almost a

thousand years?" The answer seems to be the same in both cases, and I believe that it consists in this: Parents teaching their children the gospel, and doing so especially during that early period of their lives when they cannot be tempted.

Evidence that this was so among the Nephites and Lamanites is found in a miracle the Lord performed with respect to their little children. He separated the children from their parents, taught them greater things than he had taught the multitude, and then the children taught these greater things to their fathers (see 3 Nephi 26:14-16). Does not this event help us to understand the miraculous change in that society?

Let us assume that the Lord, after having demonstrated the superior spiritual capabilities of children, instructed the parents to follow his example and that they did so. Would not the children, having been taught properly, have continued to live righteously after reaching maturity? And in the process of training them, would not the parents have become equally humble and righteous? How otherwise can we explain this astounding historical event?

With respect to the Millennium, the Lord has given this information regarding the parents who will live in that society:

"And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation" (D&C 45:58).

Obviously, the parents who will inherit the earth will be those who have learned to raise their children without sin unto salvation.

Teach children light and truth

Mormon, who wrote the account of the miracle among the Nephite and Lamanite children, wanted to give us

more details of the event, but the Lord forbade it, saying, "I will try the faith of my people" (3 Nephi 26:11). Does that miracle try our faith? It is not difficult to believe that Christ taught profound gospel truths to sinless children, whose spiritual powers as developed in the pre-earth life were equal to or superior to those of their parents. Our test of faith seems to be in believing our children of today are as able to understand spiritual truths as were the Nephite and Lamanite children of yore and in putting this belief into practice. Indeed, the Lord has commanded members of the Church of these latter days to do this very thing. Let us consider three revelations given in the early days of the Church which seem to bear this out.

In Doctrine and Covenants, section 29, the Lord states that "little children . . . cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me; . . . that great things may be required at the hand of their fathers" (29:46-48). What are these "great things" required of fathers during the time when their children cannot be tempted?

Doctrine and Covenants, section 68, suggests an answer. In that revelation the Lord specifically commands parents in Zion to teach their children to understand doctrine when eight years of age and states that if this is not done, "the sin be upon the heads of the parents" (68:25).

In another revelation given in May 1833, the Lord chastised each of the leading brethren of the Church for having failed to bring up their children in light and truth and otherwise set their homes in order (see D&C 93:41-50). Although no specific time period during which this should be done is mentioned, at the time the revelation was given all four of the brethren reprimanded were relatively young fathers with small children in their homes.

In this revelation the Lord points out that children in their infant state are innocent before God but that Satan takes away light and truth from them because of disobedience and the tradition of their fathers. To prevent this, he commands parents to bring up their children in light and truth. (See D&C 93:38–40.)

Although the Lord chastised the leading brethren, and indeed all parents in Zion, for parental delinquency, he indicated that repentance is possible. But he also said that if we did not repent, we would be removed out of our place. (See D&C 93:41–50.)

Not only do the scriptures instruct us on when teaching is best done (see D&C 68:25–32; Deuteronomy 8:5–9) but also on what should and should not be taught (see Moroni 7:14–19; 2 Nephi 9:28–29) and who should and should not do the teaching (see 2 Nephi 28:14, 31; Mosiah 23:14).

Essential part of God's plan

The early teaching of children by parents offers the solution to many problems which otherwise may afflict our lives. Is not this the ounce of prevention which will eliminate the need for many pounds of cure with respect to our youth? Is there a better way to create and promote marital harmony than for a husband and wife to fully cooperate in carrying out this their most important stewardship in time or eternity? What could bring greater satisfaction and meaning into the lives of grandparents or others than to establish the family tradition of training chil-

dren during their years of innocence? And finally, how can we more easily overcome pride than by teaching children, whose humility we must emulate in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? The proper teaching of children is truly one of the most essential parts of God's plan for our happiness.

When our Heavenly Father sends one of his spirit children into a home, it is as if he says to the parents: "John, Mary, here is my most priceless possession—the soul of a little child. As you can see, he is helpless and completely dependent upon you even for life itself. You are now given the privilege of molding his life as you think best. Please teach him that I am his Father and that Jesus is his Savior and that we want him and you to return and live with us when mortality is over. Remember that I am always available to guide you in rearing this child of ours if you will but seek my help. I hope you will do so often. Your Heavenly Father."

In a marvelous discourse given to the fathers in Israel, President Benson reminded us that our most important calling in time and eternity is that of husband and father (see *To the Fathers in Israel* [pamphlet, 1987]). I go now to spend my full time in the Andersen area of the Church, a calling from which I pray I shall never be released.

It is my prayer that each of us will recognize and fulfill well our sacred duty of bringing up children in light and truth that we may merit eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gardner H. Russell

Elder Russell's mission call

The other day as I watched the videotape *Called to Serve*, my eyes moistened in instant tenderness as

each new missionary opened and read aloud with his family the official call to a full-time mission, signed by the President of the Church. I recalled my own mission call to Argentina. After sharing

the excitement of my call with my parents, I sought out my mentor, who was not a member of the Church, a former U.S. senator, to share the news of my call with him. He was not impressed and let me know in no uncertain terms that if I insisted on serving a mission, upon my return all the good jobs would be taken and I would never amount to anything. I was disappointed but realized that he saw my future only as the world perceives.

Years later I realized that my mission had prioritized my life toward family, service, and gospel principles. As an added bonus, I was far ahead of most of my former classmates in worldly achievements.

The call is an eternal miracle

Somehow I understood even then that the call to full-time service in the Church is an unchanging, eternal miracle. Later I learned it is unique, and the call drives the Lord's Church, ever vitalizing and strengthening it every minute of the day.

The call to missionary service rarely comes when it is convenient or easy to serve. I never tire of hearing the testimony of President Ezra Taft Benson of his prompt acceptance of the call to serve a full-time mission, by letter from the living prophet of that time. The return address of the letter was simply Box B, Salt Lake City.

Married men were called to serve full-time missions even into this century. On the wall of my parents' bedroom, there hung a framed, faded newspaper clipping with a photograph of my father in the high collar and bowler hat of his time. "Married two-and-a-half years and never said a word to each other" was the caption. He left for the Australia Mission shortly after his wedding and had no verbal communication with my mother until he returned.

Among early converts who served missions in their mature years, leaving their families to do so, was my Great-grandfather Snow, who received a mission call to England and served well.

Yes, the call is an eternal miracle, never changing.

Mission calls are rarely convenient

Joseph Smith, like Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and other prophets before him, was called by name by the Lord. He related, "One of them spake unto me, *calling me by name* and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17; italics added).

Shortly after he was called to restore the original Church, a small handful of priesthood holders, many of them heads of families, received calls to go into the mission field in the United States and the world to bring thousands unto Christ. From this effort came a solid and diversified base for the restored Church.

The Prophet did not ask any of those called if they wanted to serve or if it was convenient. Each received an official call as our Heavenly Father directed. They believed the call was from the Lord and that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

Mission calls are rarely made at a convenient time. When my call came to full-time service as mission president to the nations of Uruguay and Paraguay, there were commitments of civic and business nature. All were overcome miraculously. The call was accepted. As a member of the Seventy, after more than five years I can still, as the hymn says, scarcely take it in (see "How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86). There is the same feeling of awe and humility today in the call as there was the day we were called. Let me pay

a tribute to Sister Russell. She shares this awe with me and has always been valiant in her love of Jesus Christ.

Army of full-time missionaries

As a Church, we have been fairly obedient in accepting calls from our Heavenly Father, believing as we do that the call from him takes precedence over all others—witness the army of 45,000 full-time missionaries in several hundred missions worldwide.

Many young men and women decide at an early age to serve missions if called. Some follow family tradition. Others are recent converts who accept the call to serve full-time missions. They, in turn, set a pattern and tradition for future generations.

In many wards and stakes, the call is held to be so sacred that every young man and many young women accept the call to serve full-time missions. In others, the great majority of young men accept mission calls. These are true missionary wards and stakes. The only question their future missionaries ask is, “*When* shall I receive the call to serve a full-time mission?” and not *whether* I should or should not serve.

Anything your Father asks

In several Saturday evening sessions of stake conferences in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, I have asked this question: “Please indicate by the raised hand if you would do *anything* our Heavenly Father asks you to do, no matter what, if you *only knew* that the Lord himself were asking you to do it.” A forest of hands shot up.

If it is true, and it *is* true, that all faithful members of the Church will do whatever our Heavenly Father asks them to do, perhaps the calls should be even more bold and direct. I have noticed that bishops the world over some-

times ask this kind of question of future missionaries: “John, have you thought about a mission?” The young man might say to himself, “Is it possible for a young man in this Church not to think about a mission?”

Whether it be to a young man, young woman, or married couple, the next question by the bishop often is, “Would you like to serve a mission?” This may be all right, but remember, nobody asked any of the early missionaries of the Church whether they would like to serve or if it would be convenient.

I thrilled at recently observing a good bishop arrange an appointment with a future missionary, a faithful young man, and in the ensuing interview get to know him and share the Spirit with him. He then asked if the young man would be willing to do whatsoever the Lord asked, then stated words to this effect: “In prayer my counselors and I have gone to our Heavenly Father, and he has indicated to us that you are to serve a full-time mission. What do you say to your Heavenly Father?” The response was positive. Then the bishop talked to the future missionary about what to do with his new car, his girlfriend, his education—questions that must be resolved before he is called.

Embrace the miracle of the call

At present, less than half of our faithful young men from the United States and Canada serve missions; in the rest of the world one or two of ten are called. Once we as leaders and parents embrace the eternal miracle of the call in all its force and magnificence, untold thousands more will serve full-time missions.

Our Heavenly Father might not call us by name, but his called and ordained servants will call us to serve for

a period—by name and in *his* name and by *his* inspiration and revelation. May we all have a deeper insight into the divine nature and meaning of the call, this great eternal miracle, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Gardner H. Russell.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Asking the Lord for help

Life in today's world can be at times so complicated and the challenges so overwhelming as to be beyond our individual capacity to resolve them. We all need help from the Lord. Yet there are many individuals who don't know how to receive that help. They feel their urgent pleas for help have often gone unattended. How can that be when He Himself has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7)?

Such difficulty results either from not following His spiritual law for providing help or from not recognizing help when it comes. Well did James observe, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3).

True, the Lord has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive" (D&C 4:7). But He also declared, "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me" (D&C 9:7).

It is evident that He intends that we do our part. But what specifically are we to do? No one would expect to receive a result from physical law without obeying it. Spiritual law is the same. As much as we want help, we must expect to follow the spiritual law that controls that help. Spiritual law is not mysterious. It is something that we can understand. The scriptures define it in significant detail. I will cite key

scriptures that teach how to ask for help, then summarize the spiritual law they clarify.

Scriptural teachings

The Savior declared, "I, the Lord, am bound *when ye do what I say*; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10; italics added).

John taught, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22; italics added).

Nephi counseled, "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will *not harden your hearts*, and *ask me in faith*, believing that ye shall receive, *with diligence in keeping my commandments*, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11; italics added).

The Lord has the power to bless us at any time. Yet we see that to count on His help, we must consistently obey His commandments.

Enos recorded, "I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall *ask in faith*, believing that ye shall receive *in the name of Christ*, ye shall receive it" (Enos 1:15; italics added).

Mormon wrote, "Behold, I say unto you that *whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing*, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and *this promise is*

unto all, even unto the ends of the earth" (Mormon 9:21; italics added).

The Savior taught:

"Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore *ask in faith*. *Trifle not* with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not" (D&C 8:10; italics added).

"And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is right*, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you" (3 Nephi 18:20; italics added).

"Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you*" (D&C 88:64; italics added).

"If ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done. But know this, *it shall be given you what you shall ask*" (D&C 50:29–30; italics added).

These teachings of Jesus Christ emphasize that it matters very much *what* we ask for and *how* we ask for it. I testify that when we seek His will and do it, we will obtain the greatest blessings in life.

Sincere gratitude is fundamental, for "in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21).

Now, to summarize, blessings come when we—

- Ask the Father in the name of Christ.
- Diligently keep His commandments.
- Ask with faith in Christ.
- Ask for that which is right.
- Harden not our hearts.
- Express gratitude.

Help through priesthood blessings

One way the Lord helps us is through priesthood blessings. When a worthy priesthood bearer is led to pronounce specific blessings, we can be

greatly comforted. Yet there is no guarantee of outcome without effort on our part. Appropriate use of priesthood authority opens a channel of help where the outcome is consistent with the will of the Lord. The blessing resolves those things which are beyond our own capacity to influence either personally or with the help of others. Yet we must do our part for the blessing to be realized. We must strive to be worthy and to exercise the requisite faith to do what we are able. Where it is intended that others help, we must use that help also. It is through the combination of our doing what is within our power to accomplish and the power of the Lord that the blessing is realized.

Once I was awakened by a call from an anxious mother. Her premature child was not expected to survive the night. She asked for a priesthood blessing. As I approached the suffering child, the mother stopped me, looked into my eyes, and asked, "Are you worthy to bless my child?" That was an appropriate question. One never feels completely worthy, but we must do our best to be so. There came a strong prompting to bless the child to recover. The worthy mother continued professional treatment and exercised her faith. The Lord responded with the additional blessing needed. And the child recovered.

A relative asked Elder Spencer W. Kimball for a blessing to combat a crippling disease. For some time Elder Kimball prepared himself spiritually; then, fasting, he was prompted to bless her to be healed. Some weeks later she returned, angry and complaining that she was "fed up" with waiting for the Lord to give the promised relief.

He responded: "Now I understand why you have not been blessed. You must be patient, do your part, and express gratitude for the smallest improvement noted."

She repented, followed scrupulously his counsel, and eventually was made well.

It is a sobering responsibility for those who bear the priesthood to act as agents of the Lord to help those in need. That trust requires faith, worthiness, and a sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit to communicate the will of the Lord. Also, it is a sobering responsibility for those who receive a blessing to exercise faith, to express gratitude for every degree of improvement observed, and to do all within their power to resolve the need.

Three years ago I met a young man who had been severely injured in an accident. The medical forecast was grim. If he survived, he could spend the rest of his life completely paralyzed. Recently I met him again. Through the priesthood, he had been blessed to gain the mobility needed to do all the Lord intended he do in life. He moved his electric cart near, shook my hand, sat upright, and broke into a broad grin. The room was charged with his invincible spirit. His faith—and incredibly hard, painful effort, sustained and magnified by the blessing of the Lord—has begun a miracle. With periodic help from loving friends, he is succeeding in a university and striving to progress to qualify to be a missionary. I know his continued effort will yield far greater improvement.

In striking contrast, consider another man. His first comment to me was, "Why doesn't the Lord give me a wife?" as though an eternal companion were a teddy bear to be acquired with no thought of her agency. As we spoke, it was obvious he was not doing the most fundamental things to qualify to find a wife. He admitted that maybe he should do something about his excessive weight, but that was hard. His clothes were slovenly and his body so neglected that it was difficult to stand near him. Clearly, he is not doing his part.

How the Lord's help comes

Help from the Lord generally comes in increments. He can immediately cure serious illnesses or disabilities or even allow the dead to be raised. But the general pattern is that improvement comes in sequential steps. That plan gives us an opportunity to discover what the Lord expects us to learn. It requires our patience to recognize His timetable. It provides growth from our efforts and trust in Him and the opportunity to express gratitude for the help given.

Often we have difficulty mastering lessons the Lord wants us to learn when things are going too well in our lives. When there is suffering or pain, we ask ourselves a lot of questions. Some of them ought to be: "What does the Lord want me to learn from this experience? What do I need to do? What do I need to change? Whom do I need to serve? Or what characteristic must I improve?" Pondering and prayer will help us understand what we are to learn from the challenges we are asked to overcome.

Not all our prayers will be answered as we wish. It is not always easy to know the will of the Lord, yet there are some things we can be certain of. He will never ask us to do anything that is not completely in harmony with His teachings. We cannot count on help if we are immoral or otherwise deliberately disobedient unless we sincerely repent. One who prays to know if another is to be the eternal companion while violating in any degree the law of chastity has little hope of receiving confirmation without repentance.

"For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them" (Mosiah 7:29).

"But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your

trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, . . . he will . . . deliver you out of bondage" (Mosiah 7:33).

The Lord's will is our best choice

Our earnest prayers are answered when they conform to the will of the Lord. Since we cannot perfectly understand His will, we must walk with faith. He is all-knowing, and His decisions are perfect. The fact that our finite capacity does not let us understand all of His dealings with man does not limit Him from blessing us. His will is our best choice in life, whether or not we fully understand it. When we act using our moral agency wisely, the Lord will act according to His will.

We see such a limited part of the eternal plan He has fashioned for each one of us. Trust Him, even when in eternal perspective it temporarily hurts very much. Have patience when you are asked to wait when you want immediate action. He may ask you to do things which are powerfully against your will. Exercise faith and say, "Let Thy will be done." Such experiences, honorably met, prepare you and condition you for yet greater blessings. As your Father, His purpose is your eternal happiness, your continuing development, your increasing capacity. His desire is to share with you all that He has. The path you are to walk through life may be very different from others. You may not always know why He does what He does, but you can know that He is perfectly just and perfectly merciful. He would have you suffer no consequence, no challenge, endure no burden that is superfluous to your good.

The Lord will help you

To gain unshakable faith in Jesus Christ is to flood your life with brilliant light. You are no longer alone to

struggle with challenges you know you cannot resolve or control yourself, for He said, "*If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me*" (Moroni 7:33; italics added).

If you are despondent, racked by transgression, are ill, alone, or desperately in need of comfort and support, I solemnly testify that the Lord will help you when you carefully obey the spiritual law upon which that help is predicated. He is your Father. You are His child. He loves you. He will never let you down. I know He will bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. Customarily the President of the Church has spoken words of benediction at the close of the conference. President Benson is not with us this afternoon. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak in behalf of our beloved prophet.

Before hearing his remarks, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus, Missionary Training Center mixed choir, and Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to provide service; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square. Much consecrated service goes into the preparation for and the presentation of the conference.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage given. We are grateful for

the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

Following President Monson's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing

"God Be with You Till We Meet Again," which we hope will represent the sentiments of each of us.

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy, and this conference will stand adjourned for six months. Thank you for your effort in participating with us.

President Thomas S. Monson

The prophet's love and counsel

Traditionally the President of the Church provides closing remarks at the conclusion of conference. How we would enjoy hearing from President Benson! We are grateful that now, in his ninety-third year, he is free from pain, able to move about, meet on occasion with the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, and be the recipient of your faith, your prayers, and your expressions of love for him. All of us were gratified that President Benson was able to attend a portion of the opening session on Saturday and on Sunday morning.

Since he is unable to address the conference prior to its adjournment, I have been asked to respond in his behalf. I seek the inspiration of the Lord as I convey to you the prophet's love and counsel.

This has been a glorious conference. The Brethren have been inspired in their utterances, the prayers offered have been spoken from the heart, and the music truly has been "the song of the righteous" and "a prayer unto [the Lord]" (D&C 25:12). Our sincere appreciation and gratitude go to each who has in any way made the conference most memorable.

We miss the association of Elder Derek A. Cuthbert, who was called to his heavenly home on April 7, 1991. We recall his testimony of truth concerning this work and marvel at all he

was able to accomplish, even with limitations of health. In our prayers we remember his dear wife, Muriel, and each member of his family.

The conference speakers have emphasized the troubles of our times and the necessity to make certain our lives are lived in conformity with the principles of the gospel, that all of us may merit the companionship of the Lord to guide us on our earthly journey and qualify through our obedience for the blessings He desires to bestow upon us.

Importance of the family

President Benson has frequently emphasized the importance of the family. He declared: "Remember, the family is one of God's greatest fortresses against the evils of our day. Help keep your family strong and close and worthy of our Father in Heaven's blessings. As you do, you will receive faith and strength which will bless your lives forever" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 56; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 43).

"[Our] homes . . . need also the blessings which come from daily communion with God. . . . The differences and irritations of the day melt away as families approach the throne of heaven together. Unity increases. The ties of love and affection are re-enforced and the peace of heaven enters" (. . . *So Shall Ye Reap* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960], p. 107).

Love for children

President Benson has always emphasized the strength of youth and our responsibility to youth. He counseled: "One great thing the Lord requires of each of us is to provide a home where a happy, positive influence for good exists. In future years the costliness of home furnishings or the number of bathrooms will not matter much, but what will matter significantly is whether our children felt love and acceptance in the home. It will greatly matter whether there was happiness and laughter, or bickering and contention" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, p. 46; or *Ensign*, May 1981, p. 34).

How President Benson loves meeting and shaking hands with children and youth! He has traveled throughout the Church and has always taken great pleasure in singing to the children the song "A Mormon Boy."

President Benson receives many letters from children. Sometimes they are humorous, other times tender. When President Benson was hospitalized and the doctors provided a pacemaker to help regulate his heart, one little girl wrote in and said, "Dear President Benson, I know you will be all right because the Bible says, 'Blessed are the pacemakers.'"

He wept when I shared with him a letter I received from a child's father. The letter began: "This past April, my wife and I were watching the Sunday afternoon session of conference. Our three-year-old son, Christopher, was standing on a chair at the kitchen

counter playing with Play-Doh, listening to conference on the radio. As we entered the kitchen at the end of President Benson's comments to the children, Christopher reported excitedly, 'That man on the radio said that even when we make mistakes, our Heavenly Father still loves us.' That simple statement has left a lasting and meaningful impression on our young son. I can still ask him today what President Benson said and receive the same enthusiastic reply. It is a comfort to him to know that he has a kind and loving Father in Heaven."

The Lord bless you

This touching account is representative of the personal influence for good President Benson has ever been. He is gentle. He is kind. He is loving. He is your friend and my friend, and he knows the Lord, our Savior. I am certain I speak for him and for all the Brethren as this conference concludes:

"The Lord bless [you], and keep [you];

"The Lord make his face shine upon [you], and be gracious unto [you];

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon [you], and give [you] peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang for the Saturday morning session of the conference.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the Missionary

Training Center mixed choir, conducted by Douglas Brenchley. Richard Elliott was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir

and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden conducted the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude

music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Richard Elliott, Tabernacle organists.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the conference

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